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LIFE'S IDEALS



WILLIAM DICKIE D.D.



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LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON.

LIFE'S IDEALS

BY THE REV.

WILLIAM DICKIE, D.D.

MINISTER OF DOWANHILL UNITED FREE CHURCH, GLASGOW

* AUTHOR OF

"THE CHRISTIAN ETHICS OF SOCIAL LIFE"

"THE CULTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE" ETC.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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PREFACE

THIS is not a book of the useful information order, nor is it a book of pious, but gratuitous, advice on the *do* and *don't* principle. Of such books there are so many that to venture to add another would demand an ample and convincing apology.

It is offered as a volume of Essays dealing with subjects which, though familiar, and, to some minds, even commonplace, are ever fresh and inviting to those who are interested in the development of their moral and spiritual life.

Though addressed primarily to young men, yet, as youth is not altogether a matter of years, these Essays may appeal to those farther on in the journey who have not altogether lost the zest of life, or given up the quest of ideals, as if the future had dropped too soon out of their vision.

This does not pretend to be a treatise, in which a theme is exhaustively worked out. The various Essays, however, may be found to have a common centre around which they revolve—the ideal life as seen from the Christian point of view; and also a common end—the offer of guidance to the understanding, and inspiration to the will, in the attainment of it.

The first two Essays deal with Ideals and Idealism, and furnish the standpoint of those which follow. The ideal life is then viewed in relation to Religion and Doubt, and as affecting, and affected by, the perennial problems of Work, Pleasure, and Amusements. Thereafter two of the great formative forces are discussed—Friends and Books; and lastly, two of the disintegrating elements, which act as solvents upon all ethical and religious ideals, are brought under review—Gambling and Drunkenness.

I have tried to acknowledge my debts to others as fully as possible, but every writer, who thinks seriously of his indebtedness, feels that he is surrounded by a great host of invisible creditors whom he can never hope to satisfy to the relief of his conscience. I know that I have lit my candle at many fires, but, as Swift has somewhere said, that does not affect my property in my own wick and flame. Ultimately, all light is derived from the sun.

The writer ventures to express the hope that the study of *Life's Ideals* may lead many to a profounder adoration of the great Ideal Life, which is the inspiration, hope, and goal of all that is truest and best in humanity.

WILLIAM DICKIE.

LYNNWOOD, PARTICKHILL,
GLASGOW, 1907.

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THE PURSUIT OF IDEALS, THE
ART OF LIFE

"Endeavour to be good, and better still,
And best ! Success is naught, endeavour's all."

BROWNING's *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*.

"Not less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress ;
That we can feed this mind of ours
With a wise passiveness."

WORDSWORTH'S *Expostulation and Reply*.

"The ideal poisons for me all imperfect possessions."

AMIEL'S *Journal*.

"Each new votary of the peaks experiences the same sudden conversion, expects to be able to explain his new delight to his lowland friends, and in turn discovers the same impossibility. He learns, as we have all learnt, that the delight is not translatable into words ; that each must experience it for himself and each must win his own entrance into the secret alone. The most we can do is to awaken the inquisitive sense in another, who beholds the visible evidence of our enjoyment and wonders what its source may be."

W. MARTIN CONWAY, *The Alps*.

CHAPTER I

THE PURSUIT OF IDEALS, THE ART OF LIFE

THE art of life is the greatest of all arts. In it the artist is fashioning his own soul, himself, and qualifying for the cultivation of all other arts. If it be true that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he,"¹ it is equally true that as the artist is, so is his work. For all art is the expression of the soul in its effort to interpret the soul of men and things. The artist sees himself in all his creations : the personal equation is never absent. He paints or carves, writes, sings, or plays ; but he cannot eliminate himself. The soul of the artist finds many vehicles for self-expression ; but the art of fashioning the soul, which is the art of life, must, in the nature of things, be the greatest art of all.

¹ Prov. xxiii. 7.

Yet the art of living well, of bringing out the best, of actualising the highest possibilities of our being, is the most difficult. Some elect souls are born to find it easy. Nature has been kind, and goodness is in their blood. Some find it less difficult through the happy conjunction of seemingly fortuitous events. They breathe the fragrant, balmy atmosphere which emanates from, and hovers around, the souls of gracious associates, and thus catch the wholesome contagion of nobility, and learn the art of high living unconsciously or by surprise. But, after all, these are but the few, and most men have to set themselves deliberately to the cultivation of this greatest of all arts—the art of self-fashioning. All must live somehow, yet many are content to live anyhow: hence few artists, many bunglers.

“ Art is long, life short, judgment difficult, opportunity transient. To act is easy, to think is hard; to act according to our thoughts is troublesome. Every beginning is cheerful; the threshold is the place of expectation. The

boy stands astonished, his impressions guide him ; he learns sportfully, seriousness comes on him by surprise." These first words of Wilhelm Meister's Indenture are the crystallisation of a great experience. In the lifelong art of life our difficulties begin not with learning but with unlearning. We live long before we are conscious of any art in life. We act first, think afterwards. Our emotions are excited and our imagination impressed before the capacity of judgment is awakened. To the child the world is a playground, and life a game. Unless his tutors be wise, he copies poor models ; for, at first, unconscious imitation takes the place of conscious art, and the danger is not only that the resultant life be mean, but that the taste for noble ideals be vitiated.

There is but one way of learning the art of life—by living. Every day we are at school practising the art. Stars and flowers, sunshine and storm, men and books, make their impressions upon us ; and our expression of these in word or look or act reveals the ideal of the

artist. We cannot live in a vacuum. It is impossible to retire from life in order to learn the art of life. Seclusion may make a monk, but not a man. Men are made in the stress and strain of life. And this is true of the highest life. Our Lord learned obedience by "the things which He suffered" ¹ in living the common life of man ; and He would not pray that even His own should be taken out of the world.²

When youth awakens to seriousness, and discovers that he has a life of his own to live, he is embarrassed by the wealth of his inheritance. All things are his. He is intoxicated not so much with the dreams of wealth as by his sudden possessions. The world is at his feet : he could live a hundred lives and be a hundred men. He makes many excursions, expeditions, and explorations before he finds his bearings. " The mind of a young and ardent man becomes loaded with crude, half-formed designs, unfinished plans, and duties postponed. He is like a child unaccustomed to the world, who

¹ Heb. v. 8.

² John xvii. 15.

takes a walk on a pleasant summer's day. Every object seems valuable, and he picks up a pebble here, a stick there, and gathers a great load of flowers in this place and that, until he becomes so encumbered with his treasures that he can scarcely go on. They are constantly slipping and dropping from his hands, and become a source of perplexity and anxiety to him because he cannot retain them all."¹ He has to learn the first lesson in art—to give up, to ignore, to select. He has but one life to live, one supreme ideal to pursue, and whatever does not contribute to that life and that ideal must be set aside. Every colour on the palette may be beautiful in itself, but all are not to be transferred to the canvas. The artist must choose only those which interpret, and harmonise with, the subject which he portrays.

In cultivating the art of life the first thing we have to determine is our *motif*. Every great work of art has its motif, something which

¹ Abbott's *Way to do Good*—an old book which this generation might read with profit.

determines its character, something which dominates and marshals and regulates all details, something which gives movement to the whole and makes it a thing of life. In architecture the main lines are chosen, and all other lines must illustrate and harmonise with them. These lines determine the motif—Grecian, Norman, Gothic. They may be repeated, but no incongruous lines are admitted to obscure or mar the motif. In painting, the artist chooses his motif—the idea which he intends to convey, and allows nothing to compete with it on his canvas. The eye of the observer must be attracted to and fixed upon that, and all else must be subsidiary and must contribute to its illustration. The motif in music is that which determines the choice of sounds ; and, once the motif is fixed, no movement inconsistent with its character is permissible. So in the greatest of all arts, the art of life, we must select our motif, and to that all else must do honour and pay tribute.

A man has many ambitions, but he cannot

pursue them all with equal devotion, else his life becomes a medley or a muddle. Many princes aspire to the throne, but if we are to have peace and good government, only one can be king. The others must obey, or be removed. What is to be the main idea of our life? What great thought or virtue is it to express? What supreme ideal is to reign, and give character and movement to all its details? What great motif is to urge thought to volition, and volition to action, so as to make life a beautiful and symmetrical whole? In that decision the years of our after life, with all their contents of thought and deed, lie slumbering, "like unborn forests in an acorn cup."

We may take it for granted that the end we seek must be worthy of the means at our disposal; attainment commensurate with possibility. Considering our nature, nothing can satisfy us except that which makes a demand upon all that is highest and best in us. Every serious moralist will admit that nothing short of perfection can be the ultimate ideal in life. Life is a trust,

and we are not faithful if we only administer well part of the estate. The use of our whole being up to its highest power—perfection relative to our possibilities—must be our aim. Not a perfect body merely : not a well-instructed mind merely : not a gracious spirit merely—but one and all harmoniously straining after perfection. “Be ye therefore perfect”¹ is the demand.

Stated in terms of Christian thought, the demand confronts us in a more concrete and encouraging form—“Follow Me.”² Here the sum of abstract virtues is enshrined in a personal example, in which all the possibilities of our nature are realised. It is no longer an abstraction we pursue, but a Person we imitate. The highest life is an accomplished fact. The motif has been fixed, and humanity has approved. The stone which we contribute to the building of the great cathedral must harmonise with the main lines of the plan. The place we occupy on the canvas must enrich and glorify the main figure, which gives the keynote to the whole

¹ Matt. v. 48.

² John i. 43.

painting. The few bars which we supply in the chorus must be in harmony with the principal movement which gives character to the song.

But when we come to fill up this idea of perfection, this following of Christ, we find it implies a certain attitude towards man which is nothing short of Godlike. This was how the great Apostle interpreted the significance of the motif: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you."¹ Here the ideal is a moral one, controlling and uplifting all our relations with our fellow-men. It is also spiritual, deriving its inspiration and sanction from God, whose nature we share, and whose command we are able to obey, as His "beloved children." Here also the following of Christ and the imitation of God are by implica-

¹ Eph. iv. 31, 32, v. 1, 2 (R.V.)

tion one and the same, and love is the heart-beat of all—God, Christ, and ourselves. We must “walk in love,” as Christ “loved us,” and as God loves us in Christ. Our ideal, then, is perfection; follow Christ, imitate God, walk in love; and the adoption of this is the first lesson in the art of life.

Another lesson we have to learn is to preserve the perspective of life. The lives of many resemble the Chinese pattern of the willow plate. Everything seems to be on the same plane. There is no distance, no proportion, no main motif, to which the details give harmonious contribution. How we give prominence to things which we should keep in the background, and dismiss to the distance those things which should have prominence! We cultivate the body and starve the soul. We educate the mind and emaciate the flesh. We even sacrifice mind and body to an effete spirituality. We forget that we have to drive three-in-hand in the chariot of life, and one unruly steed may retard or upset us in the race. Body, mind, and spirit have each

its claims, but the one must not usurp the claims of the other.

This want of perspective mars the lives of many. It is not merely in the pursuit of unworthy ends that men fail as men. In the pursuit of things wholesome and innocent life may be frittered away and lost, for lack of a supreme purpose that can keep them in their place so as to preserve the perspective. It is not unworthy to be ambitious of excellence in golf or football or cricket. But a man is something more than a golfer or footballer or cricketer ; and surely you do not praise the whole man when you applaud his skill. Imagine a man, made in the image of God, claiming merit before the Great Judge for his athletic proficiency ! It is not wrong thus to excel ; but it is wrong to cultivate excellence in these things to the exclusion of the higher interests of manhood. The main motive does not demand the sacrifice of all other motives, but it exacts their subordination.

The old apostolic antithesis between the flesh

and the spirit still maintains: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."¹ Each has its legitimate claims, but both are not on the same plane. Peace, however, does not come to a man by way of the extinction of the one or the other. The flesh is to be conquered, not slain; and even when conquered it has its rights as the vassal of the spirit; but the spirit rules supreme in love. Man has, no doubt, a good deal of the animal in his nature, but when the animal predominates, he sinks as much lower than the beast as he falls lower than the ideal of the man.

But there is a far more subtle, and, for that very reason, not less dangerous, contestant of spiritual supremacy in man. It appears as a rival and even as a substitute. The neglect of the spiritual side of culture by many of the most refined and honourable of our fellow-men is not due to their engrossment in animal pursuits. The antithesis of the flesh and spirit scarcely exists for them. They have risen

¹ Gal. v. 17.

above it. But a new antithesis has taken its place—that between the intellectual and the spiritual. A few generations ago the centre of interest to those who had risen above the grosser pleasures of life was God and divine things ; to-day it is the world and the wonders and delights of the material universe. The study of music, and art, and especially of science, has opened up new fountains of the most exquisite and innocent and elevating pleasure to man. The extended interest in politics, the humane struggle for social reform, and even the devotion to commerce and trade—all in themselves praiseworthy and civilising influences—are absorbing the intellectual energies of men, at the same time that they lift them above the coarser temptations of the flesh. But they do more. They weaken the spiritual life of men by the slow process of neglect and atrophy. The mind is so busy with the study of material things, so familiarised with the methods of investigation which they demand, so satisfied with the kind of certainty which they afford, that it becomes

too fatigued to devote itself to spiritual thought, and too disinclined, when it has leisure, to pursue the study of philosophical or theological truth which has to be approached by different methods and yields a certainty of a different kind.

But here, too, the perspective of life is violated. The sins of the intellect may be splendid sins, but they are none the less difficult to absolve. Can the mind of man rest with the study of the mere phenomena of the universe, the mere surface of material things? Should it rest here? Is there no rationale of the universe? Is there no divine mind expressing itself in the marvellous adaptations and utilities of nature which meet and captivate the mind of man? And what of man himself? Can man cease the attempt to solve that mystery of mysteries—the mystery of himself—his hopes, fears, inspirations, yearnings, his finitude against which infinitude seems ever pressing, and into which, to his great surprise, it sometimes breaks? What can art, or music, or science, or commerce, or any of our intellectual interests, which decoy

us from divine things, say to the facts of sin, of conscience? What sanction can they give to virtue or holiness? Are we to ignore God, as if He had never breathed His spirit into nature, or spoken to the soul? Has Christ not appeared, or suffered, or died? Is there a gospel for the weak, the sinning, the penitent, the fallen? Is the whole range of interests in the highest aspects of life and truth to be ruled out of court, as if the heavens had emptied out their glories upon earth, and man needed no longer to look up? Have we not fallen out of perspective, and relegated to a distance, almost out of sight, those things which should stand out boldly in the very foreground of our thoughts? "I do not hesitate to say that, quite apart from the intrinsic difficulties of religious questions, one of the chief bewilderments of modern life in relation to religion is this: that men have learnt most of their tests of certainty in a region which is not spiritual at all, and in which certainty hardly involves the judgment of the true man, but only, at most,

a kind of shadow of the man. Possibly, as we go deeper in knowledge, this stage may pass away. Possibly men will one day learn to trace up the principles involved in the superficial problems which occupy us so much now into the deeper world of true spirit. . . . True men will do all in their power to hasten the time when the understanding itself shall become as spiritual as it now is in essence carnal.”¹

In the art of life, however, there is need for something else, which it is hard to define though easy to recognise and appreciate. Everyone creates around him a certain atmosphere, in which he habitually lives, and which others breathe who come into his vicinity. The atmosphere may be wholesome or foul, and even unconsciously so, according to the quality of that which lies deepest in his nature. There is an emanation from every man's personality—subtle, evasive, but distinct—which yields to no analysis or even definition. We may give a

¹ R. H. Hutton's *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, p. 30, q.v.

hint of it by circumlocution; but, after all, it escapes us. It is like the perfume of a flower, which chemistry cannot analyse or physics weigh, but which by the immediate sense of smell we can distinguish. Every soul has its own savour, as every flower has its scent. And the savour tells unmistakably the very essence of the soul, as the violet asserts its distinction against the hemlock. For a man may be correct in his opinions, circumspect in his actions, and yet, if we may venture the phrase, he may not smell sweet. His breath may not be wholesome. The atmosphere of his personality may not be balmy or bracing, suggestive of flowers or the sea, but depressing and repulsive as of rank weeds and sour ditch water. There are some men in whose presence all that is best in us blossoms out as if our virtues were basking in the sun. We think better, feel more noble, and are impelled to high deeds. The atmosphere around them is reminiscent of the mountain and the rose-garden. They may not be men of brilliant speech or of breezy activity, but

they have a charm which casts a spell over us, an inner beauty and grace which are encouraging, constraining, contagious.

It was this, we think, that was in Paul's mind when he gave utterance to the strange and astonishing words: "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ."¹ He boldly attributes to God the sense of smell; for how better could he by words describe the perfume, the emanation, the subtle pervasive influence of a soul? We can only describe one perfume by comparing or contrasting it with another. We say this is like violets, that resembles roses, this we associate with jasmine. So the sweet graciousness, the scent of love, that rose up to God like incense from the Christian heart, could best be spoken of as a savour which reminded God of that savour which He perceived as emanating only from Christ or from those who had been with Christ.

This exquisite and beautiful quality, however, cannot be cultivated by itself, any more than

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 15.

we can produce attar of roses without the rose. Grace, sweetness, charm of soul, or whatsoever we may call it, is the quintessence of our whole nature. We cannot manufacture it ; we cannot imitate it. It is within us, or it is not : if it be there, we can no more prevent its expression than the flower can prevent its perfume from scenting the air ; if it be not there, it is as futile to pretend to it as to paint the lily or perfume the rose. If we will have the perfume of the flower we must cultivate the flower. If we are to live in an atmosphere of grace, our whole nature must be transformed by grace. It is not a virtue of itself : it is the essence, the virtue, of all the virtues. It gives them their quality, and from them derives its own. If we live in the Spirit, we shall walk in the Spirit, and we shall be “ a sweet savour of Christ ” unto men as unto God.

In cultivating the art of life the outward circumstances are of secondary importance. Where we are does not matter so much as what we are doing there ; nor does what we are doing

matter so much as how we are doing it. You may set an artist down almost anywhere, and he will find material for beauty. He cannot be driven away from himself and his visions. He sees himself and his visions in the labouring man's home as in the prince's palace, in mean streets and ploughed fields as in panoramic landscapes and sunset expanses of gold. Beauty is in the soul, and to the soul there is no beauty without except there is beauty within. "In our soul doth nature live : ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud." So is it with the artist of life. The commonest and most humble environment is sphere enough for a beautiful life, if we abide there content, with God. To the man of vulgar mind everything is a trade—even art itself ; he engages in it for the utilitarian end of bread and butter. To the soul of a refined man the trade becomes an art, by which he educates and elevates his nature ; and, in doing the meanest rightly and well, he demonstrates his capacity for doing the greatest. The capacity is ever more important than the performance. It is

the supreme end of the art of life—the performance which brings the greatest pleasure to the eye of the Great Observer.

“Say not ‘a small event!’ Why ‘small’?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A ‘great event,’ should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!”¹

It is the mark of the amateur that he wanders far afield in search of subjects for his genius: he is ever in search of the grand and the magnificent, and waits upon nature for his inspiration: the master finds beauty waiting for him at his door, ready to greet him as soul greets soul; for the soul of all beauty is a beautiful soul.

One thing more remains to be said concerning the practice of the art of life. Goethe tells us that Oeser, his drawing master, taught him that “the ideal of beauty is simplicity and repose,” and adds, “thence it follows that no youth can be a master.” The truth of the deduction may be granted, but it should be

¹ Browning's *Pippa Passes*.

added that youth must keep the ideal before him from the beginning of life, and must continually strive against confusion and fussiness, if the ideal is to be attained. No man can be a master without a long apprenticeship.

Simplicity and repose in life were never more difficult to cultivate than now. The overcrowding of the canvas is the bane of the young artist. The lines on the canvas and the colours on the palette become fewer as he grows in experience, till he discovers that simplicity is strength as well as beauty. Multiplicity tends to weakness and ugliness. In the art of life, however, simplicity is not so simple as it looks. The youth dabbles in many things, tastes of many fountains of pleasure, occupies himself with many interests, scatters his energies, fritters away his opportunities by grasping at all. Life loses in volume and force, and dissipates itself like a river in broad wastes of flat sands. We must concentrate, hold by a narrower course, bank in the waters, in order to obtain the strength that comes from simplicity.

Nor is repose more easily cultivated under the present conditions of life. In a commercial age activity is raised to the position of a cardinal virtue. Competition and rivalry enter into our pleasures, our luxuries, as well as our labours. Activity is the characteristic note of our modern life. We foolishly think that we are idle if we are not doing something—that the harvest of the soul does not grow when we are at rest. We are so busy living that we seldom take time to think of life, and life without thought degenerates into futility and fussiness. Some of us would do more if we did less. “Are there not twelve hours in the day?”¹ Yes, but we try to improve upon the original arrangement and to make it longer. It is the thirteenth hour, which we add, that breaks the balance and disturbs the repose of the soul. When we rush through life we trample rudely upon many of the rarest flowers in our path. Excess and exaggeration in work and in pleasure are characteristic of a mind that has lost its calm. Its

¹ John xi. 9.

static force is disturbed. "The union of life with measure, of spirit with reasonableness" is what we have to aim at. Something more of the ancient Greek animated moderation would correct the over-activity and restlessness which fever our blood in our amusements and our labours at the present day. In all this, youth cannot be a master, but the sooner he enters upon his apprenticeship the better. The ideal of life, as of art, is simplicity and repose.

IDEALISM IN LIFE

“ Our wishes are the true touchstone of our estate. Such as we wish to be we are. We cannot better know what we are indeed, than by what we would be.”

HALL'S *Contemplations*.

“ And when the evening mists clothe the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairyland is before us—then the wayfarer hastens home: the working man and the cultured one, the wise man and the one of pleasure, cease to understand, and they have ceased to see, and Nature, who, for once, has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the artist alone, her son and her master—her son in that he loves her, her master in that he knows her.”

WHISTLER'S *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.

“ But, after all, man is the great poet, and not Homer, nor Shakespere; and our language itself, and the common arts of life, are his work.”

THOREAU.

CHAPTER II

IDEALISM IN LIFE

“ALL culture,” says Emerson, “tends to imbue us with idealism.” It “inverts the vulgar view of nature, and brings the mind to call that apparent, which it uses to call real, and that real, which it uses to call visionary.” We cannot advance far in thought till we find that this solid, matter-of-fact world is not all with which we have to do. We begin to think of the supremacy of ideas. For the world is not a mere phantasmagoria, conveying a thousand unrelated kaleidoscopic impressions to the brain : it is a cosmos, an orderly whole, a translation of thought, love, purpose, which provokes and challenges our intelligence to come out and meet an intelligence similar to itself.

All material things are instinct with ideas.

Nature is but the pages of a great book of symbols—a book which only exists for the mind which can interpret it. The world is rational, and reason alone can penetrate to its inner significance. We see in it the embodiment of ideas which slumber in our own minds. The soul of things answers our own soul, as “deep calleth unto deep.” Ideas are supreme in men and things—God’s thoughts in nature and in us. God, the universe, and ourselves are related in the realm of ideas. The mind thus moves by an instinctive impulse of thought towards idealism.

All high thinking and noble living is a protest against materialism. We abstract the ideas of things, as bees the honey from the flower. We store them up in our minds for use in other days. The thought expressed in matter and conceived in mind is the essential, the permanent, element. “The world passeth away”; the thought of it—the “word of God” it utters—that remains for ever. Newton discovers the law of gravitation. He wrings the secret from the material hosts of the heavens, and declares

that his formula stands good for even unknown bodies that the telescope may yet reveal. Mind triumphs over matter.¹

The world is hard to understand, but still harder to live in. It appears at first as the arch-enemy of holiness. Christ steps upon the mortal scene of conflict, reveals the will of God which is the law of life, and demonstrates the fact that the world is not so bad that the saint cannot live in it without being materialised. He achieves the victory of spirit over matter, and heartens the poor sinner with the announcement: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Culture and holiness are triumphs of idealism.

The conflict between idealism and realism runs all through human life. It is found in art. One man paints what he sees; but if he sees only the surface of things, his art is little more than a coloured photography. He brings little to nature, and gets as little as he brings. He is realistic, and makes his appeal to all those who

¹ Cf. Kepler's words: "In reading the secrets of Nature I am reading God's thoughts after Him."

have nothing behind their eyes. We turn to the creations of G. F. Watts, and find ourselves moving in a different plane. He is no copyist, reproducing nature. Nature is forced into his service, and reproduces him. Who ever gave us such a vision of sensuality and avarice as he in his marvellous incarnations of the Minotaur and Mammon? No one ever saw such a beast or man as either, and yet no one can stand in front of these ideal representations without acknowledging that they are truer to fact than any mere transcript of nature. They are two portraits of the spirits of the power of darkness.

All great art is the transcript of the soul's vision of truth or beauty as interpreted by the man. Nature is within us, and is common and profane, glorious and sacred, according to the quality of our mind. Goethe, in his rural retreat, after writing the words, "I cannot sketch, yet never was I a greater painter than at this moment," adds, "when my eyes are fixed on all these objects, and the world images itself on my soul like the form of some loved one, then I yearn

and say, 'Ah! couldst thou but express that which lives within thee, that it should be the mirror of thy soul, as thy soul is the mirror of the infinite God!' " Here is true idealism in art—the double mirror—the art which is the mirror, not of nature, but of the soul, as the soul is the mirror of God. "What do I see in nature?" wrote Fénelon, "God everywhere: God alone."

The conflict appears in letters. Some are on the side of the beasts; some on the side of the angels. On the one hand there is delineated to us in wearisome and brutal detail life as it is lived by those who have no vision beyond self and the moment—a strange, helpless, hopeless, bestial world; real, no doubt, and grim, ugly and foetid, though presented to us in bright colours, perfumed and millineried in the highest fashion of the day. Why waste good ink, though it is cheap? What lover of literature would transfer these pictures and hang them up in the gallery of his soul? If we have any love of culture, let it not be the culture of the beast. It needs none, even with the best of us.

On the other hand, we turn to the masters in literature—voted universally as masters by the inherent sanity and idealism of men—and we find that they have eyes to see the soul of God in nature and humanity. They are somewhat blind to the superficial, the trivial, the temporary, and the bad : these do not belong to the essence of things or of men ; they are often little more than degenerations and abortions. The masters think in the sun, and have the idealist's unconquerable faith in the truth of men, the purity of women, and the goodness of things—a faith which propagates itself and ever tends to self-verification.

But the conflict of the schools filters down and reappears in the market and the street. Who has not met the matter-of-fact man who has a scorn of all moonshine, believes only in what he can see, handle, move about, or eat—the “ solid unrealities ” of life, as Hawthorne terms them ? No visions break in upon him to disturb his life, and there are “ no bands in his death.” He sees no man better than himself. He values men by

their clothes, their houses, and their bank account. Little does he know of the great world of ideas on which his own little world is founded. He thinks that the only real things are the solids, whereas the very clothes he wears have an ideal philosophy; homes are built and endure upon visions, and the very banks have their foundation, deep down beneath all stone and lime, in ideas which make for the welfare of the race. How different from all this are the true makers of society, the men who fashion the lives of their fellows! Poets, prophets, patriots, philanthropists are all idealists. They believe in the inherent supremacy of the idea. Their ideals hasten them forward, transfigure the world of common men, embody themselves in institutions, reforms, and movements, that change the trend of history. They see humanity in men, God in nature, providence in events, Christ in the poorest and most degraded; and, in serving each, they become the true masters of men.

Now, which is the truer and nobler view of life? If we have any faith in the future as

hiding in its bosom the secret of a better world, there is little doubt on which side we shall be found. The very existence of science, art, and religion, the three great spheres of man's highest activities, though a witness of man's fall, is a prophecy of man's salvation. For, what is science but the search for the truth, which man forfeited by his rebellion against the God of truth, impelled by an unquenchable faith that the truth is to be found? What is art but the effort of man to regain the vision of beauty which he lost by his expulsion from Paradise? And what is religion but the striving of the human spirit to recover the holiness from which he departed at the Fall? The history of all progress is the struggle of our poor human nature to get beyond the crust and rind of things, through the natural to the supernatural, through the things and events of the world to the eternal ideas slumbering within them, which we believe emanate from the heart and mind of God. Indeed, it is this touch of idealism which gives dignity and distinction to the commonest of

men. It lifts us above the moment, the seen, the solid, the transient, and enables us to realise our native affinities with the invisible, the heavenly, the eternal. The meanest of our race who shares the spirit of Jesus Christ, the greatest Idealist, becomes thereby himself an idealist, and inherits that life which is above time and change, which are the solvents of all material things.

Youth is the period of idealism, and the idealist is always young. Youth lives half his life in another world than this—the world that is to be ; and this old world is kept young by the endeavour to translate the visions of the one world into the actualities of the other. Youth is the true poet, though he writes no verse ; the artist, though he never handles brush or chisel ; the musician, though he never writes a score. His soul, if unperturbed, has the vision and ideal of all these. He is also the devotee of religion, though his creed be short and his ritual undefined. Heaven, God, Christ, holiness, love—the informing powers of the world—are very near and real to him. He lives in ideals and for ideals.

It is for this reason that youth is impatient, dissatisfied, and often uncharitable. When the vision is fresh upon his mind, the world is very prosaic, ugly, inharmonious. He is still too near the other world to be reconciled to this. He cannot get it to yield obediently to his mind. It is not plastic in response to his ideals. Happy is the youth whose fires of noble discontent do not burn to ashes before he has discovered that the effort to attain the unattainable is the making of all true manhood. Thrice happy the youth who follows his ideal unflinchingly, against all the discouragements of appearances, until he emerges from the prosaic life into which so many fall back before their manhood has reached its prime !

The quality of a man is tested by the question, Where is the Golden Age ? There is little hope for him to whom it is in the past. The "retrospective optimist" chills the temperature like an iceberg floating south into warmer and sunnier seas. If the ideal has been realised, the future hides no secret to invite his seeking. There are

those who see no charm in the present, in the everyday men and women and things around them. They applaud the former days and sigh for the good old times. All things are commonplace, vulgar, sordid, as seen outside the atmosphere of the soul's expectation. But, after all, the world is kept young and sacred and sweet by those who dream of the Golden Age to come. They too see with open eyes the sorrows and miseries and godlessness and greed of the days that are. They too hear "the travailing in pain" of the downcast and fallen. They too witness the strivings of God-seeking souls, the uplifting of weak and wearied hands, the spirits of humble men torn and racked between the love of the world and the love of Christ, the faint pursuit of tired souls through failure and tears towards the ideal holiness. But they believe, spite of all, that the days that are, are the best of days, because they are prophetic of better days to come—the Golden Age, to which Christ is urging them with the promise of seeing "greater things than these"—that age which

is the consummation of all the ages, that in which Christ shall reign supreme, having "put all things under His feet."

The value of life is determined by the ideals which we cherish and pursue. They lift us out of ourselves into the universal. They possess us, and deliver us from the thrall of sense and self. When at the age of twenty-five the vision of a free and united Italy appeared to Mazzini in the fortress of Savona, his life was transfigured. The deathless dream of patriotism gave dignity to his days and poetry to his pen, and was re-dreamed by thousands of humbler souls to their uplifting and enrichment till Italy awoke out of its slumbers united and free. Beatrice, the incarnation of divine philosophy, crossed the path of Dante in his youth, and consecrated for ever his imagination and his life. Through Hell and Purgatory and Heaven he followed the fair vision, till at last, gazing into her eyes, in which beauty, purity, and truth were mirrored and focused, he himself "such inwardly became."¹

¹ *Paradiso*, canto i.

The ideal of womanhood became the touchstone of all virtues and vices, and made the poet the moral mentor of his age. For love is ever the great idealist, and the fruitful mother of ideals. So long as love endures, idealism can never die. She is the transformer of youth, his gracious deliverer from mean sins and meaner passions, permitting nothing of which she does not approve to live in her presence. She opens the portals of the ideal world to the surprise of youth ; and, in loving one, youth learns to love all. Faith in the ideal manhood and womanhood is thus, spite of all the declensions of humanity, conserved by love ; but if love is betrayed in its individual experience, that faith is forfeited, and humanity is ever afterwards suspect.

Love always comes with a challenge. She expects the ideal, and, in demanding it, she creates what she demands. The tyrant will have all or nothing. To be loved is to be called to the ideal life. We aspire to be what the faith of love assumes we are. "Alas !" said

Lothario of Amelia, in *Wilhelm Meister*, "she was not lovely when she loved—the greatest misery that can befall a woman."

The love of God, incarnate in Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us," comes also as a challenge. Love calls for love. Christ brings the best or the worst out of men. He is the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. We cannot look Christ in the face and remain as we were. We must go forward with Him into the ideal life of purity, truth, and holiness, or go back into the world of temporary and material aims, to live under the shadow of our great refusal. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God;"¹ but "every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."² Christ does not argue with us, does not compel us. He reveals Himself; and, if our whole being responds to the ideal, He seems to say, in the wondrous faith of His love

¹ John iii. 21.

² John iii. 20.

for us, "If you would be like Me, you can." And what is our faith but the response of faith to faith, ours rising up to meet His, and to justify it? Faith works by love in Him and in us. "Can a man help," says Plato, "imitating that with which he holds reverential converse?" When we keep company with Christ we cannot but accommodate our lives to the company we keep: but it is not so much the conscious imitation of the copyist, as the lover's unconscious identification of soul with soul. We become imbued with His aims, purified by His purity, inspired by His spirit, till His ideals realise themselves in us, and His life becomes ours. For us "to live is Christ."

A youth without ideals is a tree without blossom, a bird without song, a ship without sail. He "nourishes the blind life within the brain," vegetates, exists. He has no poetry or passion to bind his deeds and days together with high purpose; no fire to fuse his scattered thoughts into glowing unity. He belongs to Dante's "unfortunates, who never were alive,"

whom the poet met just within the gates of Hell, on that dark plain around the brim, inhabited by those "who have lost the good of the intellect": "dreamy souls, who lived without blame and without praise." "They are mixed," says Dante's guide, "with the caitiff choir of the angels, who were not rebellious, nor were faithful to God; but were for themselves. Heaven chased them forth to keep its beauty from impair; and deep Hell receives them not, for the wicked would have some glory over them."¹

It stands for ever true that to be for *ourselves*, is not to be for ourselves. To be for ourselves, we must be for others. We must get out of ourselves, or we are lost. We must voyage forth to distant shores to gather, by the commerce of life, the merchandise wherewith our souls are sustained. We must spend our life in order to live. Life must be exchanged for more life. We feed the soul by pursuing high ideals that lift us out of our self-centredness. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."

¹ *Inferno*, canto iii.

The soul's tragedy is to have no vision to give it wings wherewith to escape from itself. When it lives within itself it becomes its own grave.

It matters not much at first what our ideals may be, if they be in the line of the best. Let us pursue anything, to begin with, which lifts our face to the skies and gives us a vision of the distance and the horizon; anything that delivers us from the blind passions of the beast, from sordid self-seeking, from the pitiful vulgarity of mere money-making and commercial success, from the dominion of this present world. Be it the vision of beauty, or the hunger for knowledge, or the dream of social regeneration—anything that keeps us in the ideal world, in which all high aims are born and nobility of life sustained—there is always a point of contact at which the Great Ideal may touch us and quicken us to the highest issues.

And even when Christ arrests us, He may not always remain the same. One vision may displace another, and yet none be lost. At one time He may appear to us as the Reformer of

society and Redresser of wrongs ; at another, as the Teacher of truth and Fountain of wisdom ; at last, if not at first, as the Saviour of sinners. Now His purity, then His holiness, last His love engages and enthralls us. But the Ideal Man will always remain the Ideal of men, and hold us to Himself from whatever angle we see Him. And this is the transfiguration of life. Meanness has no attraction, the sins of youth lose their enticement, low aims are despised ; we are idealised. Nor is this all. We have an eye now for the best in men and things ; we learn to appreciate ; a halo gathers around the humblest, and poorest, and most sinful ; they too are idealised, as we. So our Great Ideal not only transfigures us, but transfigures all men around us. We see ourselves and them not only as we and they are, but as we and they might be in Christ Jesus.

**THE RELIGIOUS APPEAL TO
YOUTH**

"Every life is a profession of faith, and exercises an inevitable and silent propaganda."

AMIEL.

"I fear the men who have no open faults. What do they conceal?"

R. L. STEVENSON.

"The part of wisdom as well as of courage is to believe what is in the line of your needs, for only by such belief is the new need fulfilled."

JAMES, *The Will to Believe*.

It was said of Wilberforce that "he never parades his religious feelings. They are only the climate of all his mind."

"In religion, as in other things, few things command the respect of the world like courage. Men will bear being browbeaten by an act of religious fidelity better than to be fawned upon. They tolerate a fanatic sooner than a traitor. We all respect a pugilist more than we do a coward. A professing Christian never makes a meaner blunder than when he thinks to flatter wicked men, and win their goodwill, by trampling on their deepest convictions, or ignoring his most solemn vows."

AUSTIN PHELPS.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGIOUS APPEAL TO YOUTH

RELIGION is the perpetual miracle of the soul. It is the inspiration of God meeting and satisfying the aspiration of man, our transitory life feeling after the Eternal, the Infinite breaking in upon our finitude.

God is not a surprise to the dawning consciousness of man. He is awaited and welcomed. We are so created that our nature craves and expects completion and satisfaction in the supernatural.

The childhood of nations and individuals is lived in a double world, the spiritual and the natural, which are not yet two spheres but one. An unseen spiritual presence dwells in nature as the soul of material things, and the unsophisticated ear hears "the voice of the Lord God

walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”¹ Mythologies are the visions of the youth of humanity, and testify to the inherent religiousness of the race. Ere the soul has travelled far from home, or forgotten in its commerce with the world the traditions of its Father’s house, the earth is full of reminiscences of heaven, nature is the mirror of the supernatural, and life is alive with God. From “the wise and prudent,” the “prophets and kings” of this world, the deep things of God are hid. They see only the visible. But to the mind that is young with hope and reverence and the sense of mystery, the vision of God is never lost, the heaven and earth are under one Lord, and man is still a denizen of both. “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”²

Religion is an indestructible element of humanity. It is that which underlies and yet surmounts all creeds and all forms of worship.

¹ Gen. iii. 8.

² Luke x. 21.

The superstitions, and idolatries, and errors of men cannot destroy it. The spirit of man, by an imperious instinct, struggles through and above all these to seek and find God. God condescends to go along strange paths to meet those who can find no better approach. The pride of the human intellect in its creeds and in its unbeliefs is rebuked by the fact that faith and piety are possible without the former, and, spite of the latter, still stand secure.

The spirit of religion is part of the original endowment of the spirit of man, and expresses itself in many ways. Superstitions may pervert it, creeds may shrink it, idolatries may repress it, persecution may crush it, and atheism may blight it, but the religious spirit still remains as an eternal impulse of the soul, urging it towards the Eternal. "Whether we descend to the lowest roots of our intellectual growth, or ascend to the loftiest heights of modern speculation, everywhere we find that religion is a power which conquers, and conquers even those who think they have conquered it." ¹

¹ Max Müller.

We must not confuse religion with theology. The latter is but the science of the former—the attempt of thought to formulate and systematise the movements of God towards the soul and of the soul towards God. Theology does not create religion, but religion theology. Religion is prior to theology ; existed, and can exist, without it. Stars shone before astronomy, and flowers bloomed before botany. Copernicus may be right or wrong, but the stars do not alter their courses ; Linnæus may err, but the flowers are indifferent to his classifications. The stars and the flowers have their origin in God ; the sciences that deal with them are the works of men. So the errors of theology do not invalidate the claims of religion. They only advertise the fact that men have failed adequately to interpret the eternal intimations of God and the eternal needs and satisfactions of the soul.

But religion expresses itself in life as well as in thought, and life may be little more than a rude translation of man's religious spirit. It does not follow that a man's religion is wrong

because his conduct is not right. It does not need a world of saints to prove the truth of religion ; nor does a world of sinners disprove it. Our life is, no doubt, a commentary on our religion ; but the poor or erroneous comment does not make the text false. If we think a man's life is a fallacious interpretation of the religion he professes, we imply that we know the true interpretation ; and our duty is not to reject that faith which he debases by his life, but to supply a better interpretation by our own. The hypocrisy of others must not be made to serve as a cloak to cover our own unfaithfulness to truth of heart and life. The inconsistencies of our neighbours never excuse our own. When George Eliot wrote : " May the Lord give me such insight into what is truly good that I may not rest contented with making Christianity a mere addendum to my pursuits, or with tacking it as a fringe to my garments," she did not justify her sincerity by a sneer at the insincerity of others. It is not enough to thank God that we are " not as other men are,"

who use Christianity as a hobby for amusement or an ornament for decoration. That is the old and cheap consolation of the Pharisee. Christianity is not to be rejected because of the follies of Christians any more than a passage of Scripture is to be expunged because of the vagaries of stupid commentators.

The difficulty of defining religion is seen in the attempts to define it. When we have defined it we discover that something has been left out ; for, in this case, definition limits the illimitable. Yet some of these definitions are instructive as ventures to grasp and confine in words that which in its totality evades our speech even when we are most conscious of its significance. Every mind approaches the subject from its own angle. "To us," said Hegel, "religion means the retirement of the spirit within itself in contemplating its essential nature, its inmost being." But religion is more than self-contemplation. We must see ourselves in relation to God. Hence Schleiermacher defines it as "the conscious contact of the

individual with the universal." To Goethe, reverence is the soul of all religion—the Three Reverences—reverence for that which is above us, reverence for that which is around us, and reverence for that which is beneath us. Sometimes religion is defined by one of its many practical aspects; as when the Apostle James says that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Of all such definitions we may say, that, whilst religion denotes all these things, it connotes infinitely more.

But, spite of the difficulty of defining religion, we cannot dismiss it as an object of thought. Our definitions may be but ventures, yet they may grasp enough to serve the purposes of life, though never enough to satisfy the claims of the intellect. By an irresistible impulse of thought, however, we must theologise. We cannot afford to ostracise religion from the precincts of our reason. "What religion do I profess?" said

Schiller ; " none of all thou namest to me. And wherefore none ? Because of religion." The poet's answer, however, rests upon the assumption that religion is little more than an inscrutable feeling of dependence upon, and reverence for, a higher Power. But what is that higher Power ? Fate, Chance, Law, God ? Thought drives us forward. What is our relation to that Power ? Are we puppets or children ? Is the Power indifferent, or jealous, or cruel ; or is there a heart of love which comes out to us in pity, and towards which we spring forward in trust and affection ? We do not argue that, because the facts of nature transcend, and often elude, our scientific investigation, we should therefore eschew science and give up the attempt to discover the laws that underlie material phenomena and the relations in which we stand towards them. We are part of the universal scheme of things, and must be ever readjusting our lives in the light of our new accretions of knowledge regarding its purposes and utilities. The ventures of science often fail

and are in error, yet she goes forward to fresh conquests. In the same way, theology may often err in its attempt to expound to reason the sublime and mysterious facts of the religious spirit in man; but that does not justify us in giving up the attempt to ascertain and define the relations which subsist between God and humanity. Man must be a creed-maker, even though he knows that God transcends all creeds. He must have a theology, even though he knows that it is but as the attempt to "bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion."¹ The words of Martineau are more profound than those of Schiller: "It is the essence and beginning of religion to feel that all our belief and speech respecting God is untrue, yet infinitely truer than any non-belief or silence."

In no period of life has man a greater capacity for religion than in that of youth. All the avenues by which religious truth finds access to the heart and life are then thrown open, and

¹ Job xxxviii. 31.

the world has not yet thrown up its obstacles. Taking the definition of religion with which we started—the inspiration of God meeting and satisfying the aspiration of man, our transitory life feeling after the Eternal, the Infinite breaking in upon our finitude—we may inquire how God apprehends us, and how we apprehend God? To what faculties does He make His appeal? In what order are they appealed to? How is it that in youth we may make the readiest and fullest response?

Religion appeals to us first as feeling. It dawns upon the soul as a solemn, undefined, inarticulate sense of the Divine Presence, circumventing and pervading our life, and giving a prophetic touch of infinity to its transitoriness; sometimes bursting the envelope of material things and revealing the spiritual essence of nature itself. At one time, the bush is aflame with a hurtless, unconsuming fire, and God arrests the soul of Abraham with the strange announcement: "I Am that I Am," and the father of the faithful finds his life swept up and

carried forth by the sense of infinity. At another time, youth finds the desert's loneliness alive with a new Presence, which visits him on the threshold of his life, and his soul is filled with that reverence which is the basis of all religion : " Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Inspiration meets and satisfies aspiration : the Infinite breaks in upon and through the finite, and stirs within the heart the sense of awe and mystery.

We apprehend the supernatural first through our feelings. By an ineradicable instinct of nature we cannot bear to stand alone in this great universe which surrounds us. We are oppressed by the solitude of our individual consciousness. We seek fellowship with the unseen, and crave kinship with the Eternal. Sometimes our human life is conceived of as found and lost in the Infinite, as in the religions of Gautama and Buddha. Sometimes the undisciplined mind is terrorised by the tyranny of the invisible world, whose cruelty can only be appeased by the harsh tribute which it exacts,

as in the demon-worship of the savage. Sometimes, as in Greece, the gods appear as glorified men, with whom humanity holds familiar intercourse. But underneath the lower and higher forms of religion there lies the need for fellowship, the craving for a truce between man's weakness and transitoriness and the infinite power which overshadows him. The loneliness of the soul argues a discoverable fellowship with God, and man first finds his escape from his intolerable solitariness by his reverence for a Divine Presence which is felt though scarcely defined.

In the second stage of religious development we pass from feeling to knowledge. The mind has to be satisfied as well as the heart. The Divine Presence is now apprehended as a Person, with the attributes of a Person, with whom we come into conscious contact. Reverence ripens into devotion, and fear gives place to love, in the presence of a God who is not only felt but known. It is part of our constitution as human beings to progress from feeling to thought, from

the vague to the definite. It is only thus we can preserve our sense of rationality in a universe which is so full of mystery. And is it not to meet this radical movement of our nature that God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ? In Him He speaks the articulate word. He appeals to the reason of man so as to enable him to know the place he occupies in the great, though transient, scheme of things. In and through Jesus Christ we know God, not as an abstraction, but as a Person, who enters into vital relations with His own creation, and invites His creatures into His fellowship. Through Him there is given to us a view of the world which displays a purpose and a plan by which all things are marshalled in intelligent order, and human history is seen to be a majestic movement making towards a supreme end, spite of all its momentary confusions and aberrations. Redemption becomes the key to the mystery of human life, and the mind rests in the knowledge of the divine and revealed purpose, as the heart rests in the feeling of

reverence before the divine and inscrutable Presence.

But religion makes a further appeal so as to capture our whole manhood. No man who looks above him and around can be entirely impervious to those feelings of awe which are awakened by the consciousness of finitude and nothingness in the midst of a universe which suggests an infinite Presence and Power. But if he goes no farther his religious progress is arrested, and he may remain a mystic, passively revelling in the luxuries of religious feelings. Nor can anyone who studies God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ fail to see some new meaning in things and in history, and to realise that the pulse of human progress has a rhythmic movement which is regulated by the heart of God. But he may stop there, indulging in refined religious reflections, living in a world of abstract orthodoxy—a high and dry dogmatist. A fuller religion demands more. It demands that our life be harnessed to our feelings and our thoughts; that the whole man be

moved by the inspiration of God ; that the will be surrendered in adoration and service. But here again the predominant exercise of one faculty may lead to one-sidedness, and mar the completeness of our religious response. Just as the predominance of feeling leads to mysticism, and of knowledge to abstract orthodoxy, so the predominance of volition issues in a self-sufficient moralism, which lacks the warmth of religious enthusiasm and the light of religious certitude.

There is thus a threefold movement of God, which is responded to by a threefold movement of man. God appears, God speaks, God calls. First, the Divine Presence appeals to the feelings ; next, the Divine revelation meets the demands of thought ; and last, the personal summons is addressed to the will. To these man replies by reverence, through which he escapes from his sense of loneliness and establishes himself in an undefined relationship with the infinite Presence ; by knowledge, through which he escapes from the oppressive mystery of the universe and of his own being ; and by surrender, through

which he escapes from the tyranny of a self-will which governs his life in violence of his reverence and knowledge. In the first phase of his religious life, man realises his dependence upon God ; in the second, he knows he may be free ; in the third, freedom is realised in bringing his whole life, through a free act of volition, into line with the purpose of God. These three elements of religion thus resolved may be combined and constitute Faith, which is the assent and satisfaction of our whole being—feeling, knowledge, and will—in view of the appeal of God to man.

Now, bearing all this in mind, we may turn to the examination of youth, as that period of life in which these three elements of our nature are in their highest state of activity and most disposed to respond to the Divine appeal. Here also the order is maintained not in separate sequence, but in general predominance : first feeling, next knowledge, last will. As he emerges out of childhood, feeling predominates, and the youth is a mystic, a dreamer of dreams, a seer of

visions. Later the mind awakens : he seeks the absolute, the perfect, the holy, in truth and beauty and conduct. He holds his opinion sure, and becomes a dogmatist. Lastly, as youth merges into the maturity of manhood, he becomes the sternest of moralists, the critic of his own life, and discovers that the personal relation to God is everything, and that nothing pacifies the heart or satisfies the mind but the surrender of his will to the will of God. If no mishap befall his religious career, it is then that feeling, knowledge, and will are recomposed at last in a perfect faith.

Youth is essentially the greatest religious epoch in life. As he passes out of childhood the youth is arrested by an impelling necessity to realise afresh and personally the contents of that religion in which his childish nature has been nurtured. Concurrent with the disturbance of his physical constitution, there often takes place a revolutionary crisis in his emotions, his intellect, his will—a great upheaval of his whole being, which alarms the sympathetic

onlooker. A series of rapid changes take place, which the foolish sometimes regard as perversity, but which in reality are incidental to the child's birth into the larger world of youth.

The characteristics of this epoch are not unfavourable to religion in the well-conditioned youth. What are they? The first is a fresh access of sensibility. All his feelings are quickened. As he realises that he has a life beyond the home of his childhood, a life in the great world around him, he is possessed with an oppressive loneliness. He courts solitude, yet craves society—not merely the society of men but of God. He is a personality ; and, as he becomes increasingly conscious of himself, he desires some point of contact with that Person from whom he instinctively apprehends that his own personality is derived. God appears to him in dreams and visions, and the sense of the Divine Presence engages and fills the soul. His feelings go out in reverence. In reverence God finds him, and he God.

But youth cannot rest here. The intellect

also has been quickened, and makes fresh demands for satisfaction. He cannot stay his mind on the old faith of his childhood. He craves to know that which he feels. It is not merely that he thirsts for information: he demands knowledge, wisdom, the universal truth which gathers up the particular, the absolute that underlies the temporary manifestation. He has a passion for absolute truth, absolute holiness, absolute justice, absolute love. All imperfections, and compromises, and prudences, and evasions, are distasteful to him. Hence his censoriousness, his impatience, his scorn of easy acquiescences with the prevailing shams and makeshifts and subterfuges of mediocre thinking and mediocre life. His desire is to see the world as governed by an absolutely good and just and true and merciful power.

Now, it is precisely this spirit, keenest and strongest in youth, which renders him peculiarly responsive to the appeal of God through Jesus Christ. In revelation he sees an ideal world brooding over the real and sordid world in

which he finds himself : he sees absolute truth rebuking the falsehood of men, absolute justice rectifying the injustice of man to man, absolute holiness rising above all human frailty and imperfection, absolute love inviting and constraining a sinful world to repentance and redemption. It is thus that God meets, by His revelation, the passionate desire for the absolute which He Himself has created in the mind of youth.

But as yet the personal note, which gives religious value to reverence and knowledge, may be wanting. The youth may still be an outsider, entertaining devout feelings and ideas as his guests without surrendering his whole life to their power. The citadel is not taken till the will is surrendered ; for the will controls the direction and destiny of the life. But youth is pre-eminently the period of all great decisions. He stands at the parting of many ways, but he cannot stand long. He must exercise his option. He must choose what he is to do and be ; what relation he shall maintain to God, himself, and the world ; what is the end of his

life. And, as the end is determined chiefly by the beginning, he is not unconscious of the solemnity of his choice.

Now, all this fresh accession of religious feeling and knowledge which the youth has gained is found to have a personal reference which he cannot easily disallow to himself. It creates a strange fermentation in the youthful bosom, which leads to restlessness, discomfort, sometimes agony and despair. In the light of his religious emotions and thoughts he judges himself; he scrutinises his conduct and criticises his life. His concern for the absolute in God rebounds upon him, and he finds that God, as the origin and end of his being, demands the absolute in him. His feelings and knowledge convict him, and urge that his life be surrendered to their power; and at last he is driven by the inner impulses incidental to his youth to make the most momentous decision of his life. Will he be true to himself and his God? Will he be content with nothing but the highest life? Will he bring his life into line with that of Christ,

though he crucify the world unto himself and himself unto the world in the process? Will he take Christ as Lord of his being, and "cast out self, though he rend his heart-strings in doing it"? Is this to be his choice? or shall he go his way into life, a coward in his own eyes, having seen the better and chosen the worse?

It is a custom among the North American Indians, when the age of adolescence is reached, to send out the youth into the wilderness alone, to fast for four days in solitude. There he must stand in sunshine and storm, in darkness and day, awaiting the Divine vision and call, as he chants his weird song, as his forefathers did in other days: "God, here, poor and needy, I stand!" He is expectant of the great miracle which the Spirit works upon the life of youth—the supreme revelation which links his fleeting and weak life to the Eternal and Omnipotent; expectant, too, of the summons which decides what his life shall be.¹ This beautiful ritual of youth is true to the instincts of the human

¹ Coe's *Spiritual Life*, pp. 48, 49.

heart, which tell us that on the threshold of life all great decisions are made and sanctioned by the Divine approval, and that the greatest decision—that of the soul's relation to God—is then most easily and most naturally resolved upon.

Sometimes we are apt to think that the great religious awakening or decision, which forms the turning-point of life, comes more naturally at a later date, when the troublous period of youth is past. But it is the stress and storm of youth's emotional and intellectual struggle which in fact ripen the supreme crisis and hasten the decision. If the youth passes through that climacteric period without obeying the call of God at his religious awakening, he is not likely ever to feel the same necessity for decision laid upon him as a man. When we pass our youth without religious decision, every year of our life that we live the probability of conversion diminishes. Recent investigations into the facts of the spiritual life have established this. Of one thousand, seven hundred, and eighty-four

men, of different stations in life, different educational advantages, and different callings, whose experience, however, agreed in this point: that they were conscious of having undergone a decisive spiritual awakening which led to conversion and surrender, it was found that the average age at which their religious decision was arrived at was 16.4.¹ What does this point to? Is it not to the fact that God has ordained that, by the very constitution of our being, youth is the period of the greatest religious capacity and opportunity? It is then we may catch the flood-tide of the Spirit, and pass into safe waters; but if we miss it, the rest of life may be spent floundering in the shallows.

¹ Coe's *Spiritual Life*, p. 45.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DOUBT

"One of the greatest pains of human nature is the pain of a new idea."

BAGEHOT'S *Physics and Politics*.

"Never be afraid to doubt, if only you have the disposition to believe, and doubt in order that you may end in believing Truth. . . . He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed to love his own Sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."

COLERIDGE'S *Aids to Reflection*.

"And if it be true, as Christ teaches, that man may take the initiative with God, as well as God with man,—that times of trust are times of grace, that knocking leads to opening,—that when man throws himself on God, God pours a new tide of spiritual life into man, then, surely, one of the explanations of a want of faith in the invisible is a previous want of appeal to the invisible,—a self-occupation in thoughts and things which turn us away from the invisible, a life of absorption in the superficial phenomena of existence."

R. H. HUTTON'S *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*.

CHAPTER IV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DOUBT

DOUBT is an incident of thought. It is part of the discomfort and disorder consequent upon the readjustment of our mental furniture to accommodate new ideas. It is an evidence of our mind's love of order and unity and harmony. The new thought demands space, and so creates disturbance. It also affects all our old ideas, which must be tuned up into unison with it. A new truth is at first an embarrassment to the mind, as a new piece of furniture is to a room. Some of the old things have to be discarded as useless, some put into a corner as questionable; some have to be done up again as threadbare; some have their weaknesses displayed and have to be repaired; some parted with as totally out of keeping. The new becomes the critic and

mentor of the old. Everything is questioned in the light of its fresh demands, and during the process of reconstruction the mind is harassed with doubt.

Doubt is not to be condemned as a moral offence. It is the growing pains of the mind, and is as natural, and may be as innocent, as the growing pains of the body. The process of thought takes place, like the process of physical growth, by waste and repair. We are constantly giving off the old in order to assimilate the new. Knowledge implies doubt. As Goethe has said : " We only know when we doubt a little. With knowledge comes doubt." It is by doubt that we sift, purify, reject, or rehabilitate our thoughts.

Doubt is not to be courted or encouraged. Like all other sicknesses, it comes soon enough when it comes. When it does come, it brings with it pain and sometimes agony. Nature is struggling to recover the equipoise of health, which expresses itself in happy and contented activity. It is not necessary to be always questioning our old and serviceable ideas, though we may welcome and weigh all new truths that meet us, accom-

modating, using, and enjoying them when we find them better than the old. But we must remember that a house is not built in order to afford the excitement of furnishing and re-furnishing, but for living in. We must not drain the springs dry for chemical experiments, and leave no water to quench our thirst. We need not induce disease in order to study morbid anatomy. Doubt is not the habit of a healthy mind, though a healthy mind may be subject to occasional attacks of doubt. Doubt is not a mental luxury. A wholesome-minded man can scarcely be said to enjoy bad health.

Nor should we attempt to stifle our doubts by entrenching ourselves in ignorance. The deadliest of all doubts is to doubt that light illumines, and that the eye can distinguish it from darkness. Orthodoxy that is afraid of itself is heresy. When doubt comes in by the door, we have not done with it when we toss it out by the window. The house is haunted as by a spectre ever after. We have seen everything for a moment in the flash of its strange light,

and nothing remains the same. We may go back upon our old faith, and hide ourselves in the make-belief that all things are as they were; yet the old authority is gone, and our faith is comfortless because suspected. Or we may go forward as the subjects of a new authority—an external authority—that, say, of the Roman Catholic Church, so as to allay the disturbance and re-establish our peace of mind. Yet what does it all signify but that we have got rid of our doubts by doubting ourselves and the direct testimony of God to the soul? It is like cutting off a foot to cure a corn, on the supposition that a wooden foot would do as well as a live one. When speaking of Dirleton's *Doubts*, Johnson remarked that "his doubts are better than most people's certainties." Our doubts are, at least, living things; but the certainties which we have doubted, and then accepted on the authority of others, without our own intellectual or spiritual verification, become dead dogmas. They are not seeds but stones.

Doubt is peculiarly incidental to the transition stage in the mind's development, the stage

between the assumed certainties of childhood and the verified certainties of the man.' It may appear, however, at all stages of the mind's progress. The child may question many things, but he has merely a detached interest in the questions he asks—a kind of impersonal intellectual curiosity. The grown man also asks his questions, but he has become accustomed to his ignorance, and no longer chafes against his lack of omniscience. The youth, on the other hand, has an extravagant faith in the power of his reason, and everything that will not submit to its demands brings pain. His mind plays like a solvent upon the old beliefs in which it was wont to rest, and loses confidence in the grounds of their validity. He sees the superstructure still standing as before, but he has not explored for himself the hidden foundations upon which it rests. He cannot, perhaps, say that the house is not secure, but he has an uneasy suspicion that it is not safe to live in until his investigation is complete. At this period doubt is an intensely personal matter.

He feels that his very life depends upon the solution he finds.

We are so constituted that our mind has an instinct for certainty. It cannot rest in doubt. We must pass on to the certainty of faith or the certainty of unbelief. When we doubt everything, we do nothing. Doubt slits the nerves of action. To preserve our rationality, we must construe the world and ourselves as integral parts of it, in one way or another. We must have a certain amount of dogmatism to relieve us of the feeling that the universe is a chaos through which we cannot grope our way. Even the dogmatism of unbelief offers a certain escape, and affords a basis upon which a man may regulate his life to some definite issue. But doubt is a mere makeshift, a distemper of the mind, which unfits us for all reasonable and purposeful activity.

The experience of the world, however, teaches us that faith is the best of tonics. She has always the vision of the future, and leaps forward to realise it. All great things are born of faith—

discoveries of science, conquests in battle, success in grand enterprises, progress in social causes, attainment in saintliness of life. Doubters are debaters; believers are doers. Not that we require to have solved every difficulty before we begin to live. To many of us that were to postpone living till life was done. As a matter of fact, life can be lived upon a very slender stock of verified certainties. Under these conditions millions do live their patient lives of toil and drudgery. But as one certainty outweighs a hundred doubts, the one may go out to do battle whilst the hundred remain in camp debating the probabilities of the engagement. We may have faith only "as a grain of mustard seed"; but it is a seed, and has all the potency of a seed, and may remove mountains. A little faith, if the object of it be great, can carry many a doubt upon smaller things without serious encumbrance; and the more we tax its strength the stronger it grows, as saplings grow under the stress of the storm.

Doubt is the movement of the pendulum

between the points of rest at either end of its travel. It has often been remarked that thought progresses by a certain rhythmic motion, for as a living thing it can never find absolute rest. First it asserts a truth, then turns upon it in doubt, and again reasserts it with modifications or amplifications. It is always seeking to redress its errors. When the mind swings back into idolatry, a period of doubt and revolt usually succeeds; and then, as in Mohammedanism, the unity of God is reasserted as a great reassuring certainty. But when the unity of God is emphasised in such a way as to become an abstraction, without movement, without vitalising contact with the world and with man, doubt plays upon it again, and resolves the unity into Trinity, and the mind finds light and comfort in the thought of God the Father, revealing Himself in the Son, through the Holy Spirit.

It seems that the longer the mind rests upon a truth the more it exaggerates its scope and importance, and the time comes when it demands the

rectification of its own errors. When, for instance, too great emphasis is laid upon love, the claims of law and justice are put in by way of redress. Asceticism is the revolt against luxury; puritanism the recoil against moral laxity. Monasticism is the protest against worldliness. Back and forward swings the pendulum. The truth becomes a half-truth, and the mind flees from its danger to the opposite extreme. Whenever the intellect seems to have reached finality, it turns upon itself in doubt, strikes its tent, and moves forward. But the movement is not a weary reiteration. It is a progress by apparent retrogression—a shedding off of error and an accretion of truth—a waste and repair—an evolution by elimination. The movement of the pendulum of thought seems merely to be repeated; but when we turn our eyes to the clock itself, we discover that the hands indicate the forward advance of the day.

There are many causes of doubt which cannot be overlooked. The great wave of religious uncertainty which seems to be passing over

the Western mind, is not altogether a revolt against the dogmatism of other days. May not the prevalence of religious doubt be traced rather to the fact that for many years the mind has been absorbed and fascinated by the study of the material phenomena of the universe? The interest in theology has been slackened by the unprecedented interest in science. We have been so busy exploring the wonders of God's earth that we have had no time to think of the mystery of God's being. The natural phenomena are tangible, near, immediate, inviting inquiry, open to investigation, yielding ever fresh surprises, which quicken the curiosity and afford immediate, utilitarian, results ; whilst the supernatural seems, to the mind that has been engaged in naturalistic studies, a region of abstractions, dreams, unrealities, or, at best, conjectures, which the practical understanding cannot verify. The great objects of thought on which, in less pragmatic days, our fathers dwelt—God, Providence, Salvation, Revelation, Redemption—are displaced by mechanics, chemistry,

electricity, natural history, and other studies dealing with the superficialities of things. Sometimes, no doubt, the student of science gives a glance over his shoulder at the old problems of God and the soul, and makes his pronouncements upon them as a patron with gracious favour, or as a prophet of doubt and doom. But the things of the spiritual world are not to be mastered by the fag-end of our thought. They are not to be made the mere recreation of the scientific mind, to be turned to as a by-play when the brain has been fatigued by natural research. The truth is that the exorbitant interest in scientific pursuits, unselfish and unworldly though it be, has much to do with the prevailing doubt of the day. The methods of the natural sciences are not those which can be applied to the spiritual world. To the modern scientific mind theology is only an airy speculation, dogmas are mere abstractions; the questions of the soul and the future are lost sight of in the problems of the body and the present. Doubt is, in such conditions, not

so much the result of profound inquiry as of superficial knowledge.

Closely allied to this as a cause of religious uncertainty is the prevalence of the commercial spirit. There is nothing in commerce itself, as there is nothing in science, which is necessarily hostile to religious truth. But it generates a type of mind which, through familiarity with the aims and ideas and methods of commercial life, finds itself strange and unsympathetic when it passes into the region of abstractions concerning the supernatural life. The intense activity of business is unfavourable to meditation. Few minds can cultivate high thinking whilst devoted to money-making. Besides, the competition in commercial life has reached so keen a point that the youth who does not devote himself strenuously to the scientific side of his special business has little chance of success. All this leads indirectly to increase the tendency towards doubt; because, whilst fitting itself for the keen struggle of commercial life, the mind is dealing with subjects which can all be easily

investigated, and about which certainty can usually be attained ; whereas, in the region of religious thought, on the other hand, it is dealing with subjects to which it has only given a very superficial study—subjects also which are not to be verified by the usual methods of science, but by the higher tests of spiritual understanding and experience. It is not impossible to cultivate that high spirituality of mind without which religious certainty cannot be attained, whilst at the same time the affairs of the world are pursued with the ambition and interest which are almost essential to success ; but there are few minds capable of such easy detachment from one set of thoughts to another set which is so different. So that the doubt which is due to the commercial spirit of the world is not to be attributed to direct hostility, but to the neglect of the cultivation of the spiritual habit of mind and the consequent atrophy of the spiritual life.

Nor is that all that has to be said concerning the diagnosis of doubt. The old “ love of the

world," which has ever been unfavourable to, and indeed incompatible with, "the love of God," has been deepened in its intensity by the material results of science and commerce. The comforts and pleasures and luxuries of life are all more widely spread, more easily attained, and more generally coveted and enjoyed. To many the world is not so hard and inhospitable as it once was. The need of consolation and hope is not so keenly felt in the midst of all the present and immediate satisfactions which are at hand. The world is a very comfortable place of residence, and heaven seems farther off and less to be desired by those who live in affluence and ease. The old longing for the heavenly paradise and for the coming of Christ, which once inspired the song of the poets of Christendom, has given place to the desire for an earthly paradise of material comfort to be shared by all, and for the coming of Christ as the reformer of the old world as it is, rather than as the herald of a new order of things. If only the world and we who inhabit it were permanent! But we

and all things around us only "come to pass." It is this engrossment in the present, this desire for physical comfort, this passion for pleasure, which distract our thoughts from the great concerns of the spirit, and create within us a weaker sense of their importance, of their necessity, and even of their reality. In this case, doubt is not produced so much by thought as by want of thought, a weed that grows of itself from the neglect of mental culture; and yet it is equally destructive of religious certainty.

The seriousness of religious doubt has always been felt to consist not in its mental discomfort but in its moral issues. There are many things of which we may be in doubt and yet be none the worse. A man, for instance, may doubt the law of gravitation, the rotundity of the earth, the Copernican theory of the movement of the planets, or the authorship of the plays accredited to Shakespeare, and he may remain an honest man, a useful citizen, and a devoted father—though his friends might have some anxiety regarding the ultimate issues of such

eccentric mental activity. But when a man doubts the personality of God, he feels that moral indifference is impossible. It is no longer an exercise of intellectual gymnastics. He realises that his opinion involves a grave moral responsibility, for he is touching the vital springs of his own being. If God is not a Person, who and what am I? It is the same with all the verities of the spiritual life. We cannot trifle with them, pouring the solvent of doubt upon them, without concern as to the moral results. If the Fatherhood of God is questioned, where is the rational basis for our faith in the brotherhood of man? If immortality is only the dream of an over-sanguine human spirit, and life is rounded off by the cradle and the grave, the worth of a man is in every way depreciated in value. If the Christian redemption is cast into the limbo of uncertainties, life is shorn of the personal hopes and expectations which have added fresh glory to the living of it, and human progress has lost its supreme purpose and goal. Religious doubt, therefore, shakes the very

foundations of our moral life, and the wider its area extends the deeper is the sorrow of a man's spirit.

Some of us can remember the poignancy of that sorrow which so often clouds the natural joy of youth. It is in that critical period especially that the most acute disturbance takes place, for we are then most keenly alive to the necessity of adjusting the claims of reason, which are asserted with an almost overwhelming exuberance and exorbitance. Everything must be verified. All assumptions must be examined. What does not yield to proof must be set aside as unworthy of reasonable beings. Our instincts, our conscience, our old beliefs in which we rested, suffer shock from the strong impact of the freshly realised demands of the intellect.

But when we start our mental career with the assumption that reason must dominate all thought and dictate in all matters of conduct, we do not usually see to what strange passes it will lead us. It is true that we must assume that the universe is a reasonable universe which

answers to our reason, and which our reason can understand, utilise, and enjoy. Order and adaptation and purpose are the evidences of a reason which is implicit in all things. It is true also that a reasonable world is to be interpreted by reason. But when we assert that nothing is to be believed which we cannot prove in terms which satisfy the reason, we push beyond the mark and paralyse the moral and spiritual life. What reason? Whose reason? Yours? Mine? Reason must understand a universe which is instinct with and held together by reason; but the reason which is the measure of all things must be the reason which created and sustains them—not the individual's reason, which may be untrained, or prejudiced, or impaired, or even perverted by sin.

The fact is that when we magnify the right of reason to shape and sanction all our beliefs and actions, we fall into many absurdities. A large portion of mankind has neither the mental capacity nor the mental equipment for sifting, examining, and deciding upon the

evidence of the great facts and doctrines upon which the Christian faith is founded. Many have the capacity and perhaps the training, but not the leisure. All these are to be ruled out of their rights to religious faith, with its consolations and hopes, its moral impulses and spiritual aspirations, in favour of a select, gifted, trained, and leisured intellectual aristocracy! "The common people" heard Jesus gladly; but how many of them could have justified the faith that justified them? How many of them could have stated to themselves or others the reasons for which they trusted Christ? Was their faith ignorant, foolish, wrong?

If we were to doubt everything which we could not reason out, we would scarcely have time to live for discussing how we should live. Great part of our life is based upon working theories which the general experience of man has proved to be serviceable and conducive to moral well-being. In pursuing a certain line of conduct we are suddenly pulled up by

our conscience. It issues its verdict that such conduct is wrong. What are its reasons? Must conscience own the sovereignty of our reason? It is a fact of experience that the more we insist on finding reasons to justify conscience the less authoritatively conscience speaks. Conscience declines the argument. When our reasoning seems conclusive to the intellect and yet insults the conscience, we may doubt the validity of our logic rather than the verdict of our higher self.

It is the same with our affections. No doubt they are implicitly reasonable. Reason—not, perhaps, yours or mine—could justify all the claims they make upon us; but we do not think of submitting them to such an analysis. Every mother is a Madonna to her child. Do we ask it to furnish reasons for its idealising love? Do we call this an illusion? Is it morally valueless? Can the bridegroom state his reasons for leading to the altar his bride rather than some other woman, who is perhaps more wise and more beautiful? Has he re-

nounced his rationality because he never doubted his instincts? Is the husband to hold his faith and love in suspense until he has tabulated all his reasons for adoring his wife? Life would become intolerable, impossible, absurd, if we required to justify to the reason everything we did. We must live, and life is something more and better than a weary game of mental gymnastics.

All through life it is evident that doubt unnerves us for action, faith braces us. Virility of life is with the believers; they have the key of the future. We go out into life every day upon faith. We have no guarantees that we shall be alive to-morrow, yet we embark in great enterprises, start new businesses, begin fresh studies, pledge our affections, and love and marry, as if the years were ours. We cannot prove that death will not put an end to any and all of these ventures in a few months. But must we decline to go forward in life because we cannot prove what time we have to live? Even the common business life of the world is

built upon trust. If sufficient proofs for that trust were demanded between man and man, business would be at a standstill. Universal distrust, until evidences for faith are forthcoming, would lead to commercial dishonesty and disaster : for nothing breeds the liar and the thief like suspicion. In the various relations of life, therefore, a policy of doubt leads not to a more reasonable or a more beautiful life, but to moral disintegration or moral paralysis.

It is the same in our spiritual life. The intuitions and instincts of the spirit have to be trusted, for the highest verification of religious truth is not granted to the reason. Spiritual truth is ultimately verified by spiritual experience. Why do we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Redeemer? Why do we believe in our mother, our friend, or our lover? Do we gather up and marshal our proofs before we venture to love and trust? The appeal of a person is made to our affections, our conscience, our intuitions, our instincts—to the whole man—and from the whole man the re-

sponse of faith or love is returned. So we believe in Christ. We get our proofs from our faith, not our faith from our proofs. Our proofs are discovered after we have made the venture to trust. First venture, then verify. The proof is in the impress He makes on our character, the love of the soul which He answers and satisfies, the hopes which He meets, the ideals of which He is the realisation, the peace and comfort He brings, the sense of forgiveness He bestows—in other words, in our whole experience. We can answer the doubters who demand our reasons in the words of the blind man whom Jesus cured: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." No sane man doubts the immediate evidence of his senses.

When Jesus appeared in the world, He did not assume that He was manifesting Himself to a generation of sceptics. Indeed, He did not, and would not, provide the proofs which were demanded by doubt. He took for granted this element of faith which is the groundwork

of common life, and made His appeal to it, believing that it would instinctively leap forward to meet His appeal with answering approval and consent. And He could do this with confidence, for He knew that experience would confirm and honour the faith which ventured to trust Him, and would never belie the love that clung to Him.

And yet there is doubt and doubt. There is doubt which springs from moral perversity, and doubt which springs from the desire to know the truth and to be true : the downward doubt and the upward ; that which the baser-minded enjoy, and that which pains the sincere. Christ had nothing to say to the former ; but to the latter, in which reason is in conflict with the higher and uncorrupted instincts, He proffers His assistance. To the Scribes and Pharisees He did not, and could not, manifest Himself. They had disqualified themselves by their moral aversion and by their spiritual apathy. What evidence could satisfy the reason when the heart refused to make the venture of love in

answer to love? To Thomas, on the other hand, who was seeking to doubt himself into faith, He offered such satisfaction as the inquiring mind demanded. But the offer itself was such a revelation of condescension and grace as dispensed with the need of proof, and Thomas emerged from his doubts, not because he put his fingers into the print of the nails, but because love revealed itself in such willingness to gratify the demands of an inquisitive and truth-loving mind. The lower evidence of the senses was dispensed with when the higher evidence of love dawned upon the soul.

THE ETHICS OF WORK

" I wish I could read *Treasure Island* : I believe I should like it. But work done, for the artist, is the golden goose killed. You sell its feathers and lament the eggs."

R. L. STEVENSON, *Letter to Haddon*.

" I observed that Garrick, who was about to quit the stage, would soon have an easier life. JOHNSON : I doubt that, Sir. BOSWELL : Why, Sir, he would be Atlas with the burthen off his back. JOHNSON : But I know not, Sir, if he will be so steady without his load."

" There is but one method, and that is hard labour ; and a man who will not pay that price for distinction, had better at once dedicate himself to the pursuit of the fox,—or sport with the tangles of Neaera's hair—or talk of bullocks and glory in the goad ! There are many modes of being frivolous, and not a few of being useful ; there is but one mode of being intellectually great."

SYDNEY SMITH.

" It might please God to keep me poor, but I trust it will never please Him to keep me idle."

FLEMING STEVENSON.

CHAPTER V

THE ETHICS OF WORK

THE question is not whether we shall work. Work is the primal necessity of life. Nature will not, of herself, feed and clothe us. Even the savage must hunt for a living. The earth is a vast storehouse of raw materials, capable of meeting all our wants; but it is only by the conquest of labour that we acquire what we need or desire. To "subdue" the earth is the original condition of life. The meal upon our table, the table itself, the house in which we dwell, the garments in which we are dressed, the shoes on our feet, the roads we tread—all are the products of human toil; we, or others, have wrung them by labour from the bountiful earth, which yields little or nothing of her wealth except in exchange

for work. Money itself is but a counter, a symbol, of work. Labour is a necessity of life.

Idleness has well been numbered among the seven deadly sins. It is a sin against God : it despises the faculties which God has bestowed upon us, and frustrates the divine purpose of our being. It is a sin against society : the idler is a parasite, who lives upon the sweat of his neighbour's brow. It is a sin against self : for he that will not work is a truant from that school of life in which all great lessons are learned.

But idleness is not only a sin ; she is the prolific mother of worse sins. Her brood is legion, and infests the unoccupied soul. There is truth in the old Turkish proverb : " The devil tempts the busy man, but the idle man tempts the devil." Nature has a stern provision for punishing the idle. The neglected garden soon ceases to produce the lily and the rose : when man does not woo the earth by labour, and win her by thoughtful attention, she brings forth the nettle, the thistle, and the

thorn. So with the garden of the soul : when flowers of virtue are not cultivated, the weeds of vice grow of themselves.

Some cannot work—those at the two extremes of life, infancy and old age. But God has made provision for both in the two original instincts of humanity : parental affection provides for the needs of those at the beginning of life, and filial piety for those at the end.

Some need not work. Others have stored honey for them in the hive. But their honey is turned into bitterness when there is no appetite of health or hunger of toil. They who need neither to toil nor to spin have a duty to the toilers and spinners and to themselves. They may sweeten laborious lives by labours of love, and in sweetening these they sweeten their own.

The best work is done in the morning. The morning is the time of hope, energy, enterprise. The new day brings new life. The old German proverb tells us : “ Die morgen stünde hat gold im münde—The morning hour has gold in its mouth.” And what is true of the morning of

the day is true of the morning of life. How we work for the day depends upon how we have tuned the soul in the morning. What are the visions and ideals of a youth as he goes forth to work, brushing aside the dew of dawn with eager feet? How does he enter upon his morning task? What are his first works? How does he mean to translate himself into his toil? Tell us this, and we know the quality of his life as a man. The first few strokes of the artist's pencil are the most significant; they determine the whole picture.

Youth has many opportunities of technical education. There are many to teach him how to use the hand, the eye, the ear, the voice; but more important than all is how to use himself. The man is greater than the mechanism of the man; the man is greater than the workman. The character of all our work is borrowed from the character of the man: clean or slovenly, base or noble, true or false. Work is expression, speech, an outer transcript of thought, feeling, will. Hence the value of technical education

is conditioned by moral education. The art of life embraces and is higher than the art of work : what I do can never be better than what I am. The best preparation, therefore, for the work of life, and the first, is the preparation of the worker. In what spirit, with what ends, towards what ideals does he toil ? All mechanical and artistic skill is subordinate and subservient to spiritual motive and purpose.

In the preparation of himself as one of the world's workers a man has first to learn to live above his work. He is not a piece of the machinery : he is a thinker, a maker, and stands over all material things as their lord and master. The finest machine in the world is the human brain. It is the fashioner of all the tools of labour. We speak of the marvellous power of steam and of electricity ; but it is the mind that generates steam and harnesses the lightning. Put the mind in order, and all instruments of toil work to its bidding.

All great and good work is done by those

who come down to it. Work then becomes the play and the pleasure of the man. It is the expression of his best ideals and purposes. When men speak of "rising to the occasion" in the doing of a task, they confess that their average life is below it, and what they accomplish bears the marks of effort and strain. Great things are done by those who "come down" to the occasion, by those who live above their work and descend to the doing of it. "Everyone who is worth anything carries his higher nature with him into business; and there, as elsewhere, he is influenced by his personal affections, by his conceptions of duty, by his reverence for ideals." ¹

The altitude of a man's moral and intellectual ideals is one of the forces which determine the character of his work. A cannon ball at rest on the floor scarcely makes any impression on the wood. If I lift it a foot and let it fall, the impression is visible; if I suspend it to the ceiling and let it go, it crashes through the floor. The higher

¹ Marshall's *Economics of Industry*, p. 19.

the altitude from which it comes down the greater its power. We account for this not merely by the weight of the ball, but by the force of gravitation. So in all work we do : new power is added to us if we come down to the doing of it from the higher altitudes of thought and virtue. The value of the worker is determined by the worth of the man.

In order to live above our work it is necessary to cultivate interests which bring no immediate gain. He is a poor workman, no matter what his work may be, who thinks of nothing but his work. He must not become involved in the mere machinery. He must rise above his drudgery by cultivating the love of truth and of beauty and of humanity ; and when he comes down to his task, refreshed and invigorated by these higher pursuits, his task ceases to be a drudgery.

In order to cultivate *the love of truth*, one should keep the high company of those elect spirits who have embalmed their thoughts and enshrined their visions in books. It is well to

have always a great and good book on hand. For a few pence one may gain access to the presence of one of the world's master thinkers, and share the fruits of the study and experience of years. In these days there are few young men who can plead the poverty of their purse as an excuse for the emptiness of their bookshelf. Cut down your superfluities, and you will have money to buy books ; cut down your amusements, and you will have time to read them. Then everything you do will be better done.

For the same reason *the love of beauty* should be cultivated. We live in a world of beauty—beauty of form, beauty of sound, beauty of colour. God is everywhere appealing to the sense of beauty which He has implanted within us. He adorns the night-sky with jewels, the day-sky with many-shaped and many-tinted clouds ; and the observant mind is enchanted by their wonder. The hedgerows are fragrant with flowers, and the woods jubilant with orchestra and chorus ; and yet in most men the sense to perceive remains sealed. Eyes have they,

but they see not ; ears have they, but they hear not ; hearts have they, but they do not understand. God is seeking through nature to awaken within us the artistic sense, which is one of the sweetest and most accessible fountains of pleasure, and is telling us in many ways that His earth is more than a laboratory or workshop ; that it is a house, a home, luxuriously furnished and decorated for the enjoyment of His children. Learn to sing, to play, to draw, to paint—to pursue and cherish the ideals of beauty ; and, though your art may bring little pleasure to others, and to you no immediate gain, by living above your work you will step down to it with a fresher and purer mind.

Nor should a youth neglect to cherish *the love of humanity*. The measure of our own manhood is our love of man. When I have learned to go beyond myself, I have made the great escape into liberty ; and when I entertain with sympathy the joys and sorrows and hardships and cares of others, their lives pass into mine, so that mine is multiplied an hundredfold.

My universe is enlarged when I go out of myself and live my life in the lives of my fellow-men. I am here to live many lives. Is not this the significance of the hard saying of our Master? No man forsakes his circumscribed individual life for the sake of Christ and society without finding that he receives "an hundredfold now in this time . . . brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, . . . and in the world to come eternal life."¹ This is the larger, richer life into which we are ever invited. The Church of Christ opens to us a door by which we may enter—the door of Christian service. We must not forget that the service of Christ in the Church is not an end in itself; it is the prelude and preparation of the service of Christ in the world. If we come in to worship, we should go out to work. They who are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,"² should also be "workers together"³ with Christ.

What, it may be asked, has this to do with

¹ Mark x. 30.

² Eph. ii. 19.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

one's ordinary work? It has everything to do with our work, because it has all to do with the workers. You sharpen your tools, you oil your machine, you train your fingers, in preparation for your task; but your tools, and machines and fingers, are only your servants; and how can the servants do good work if the master himself is not instructed? Improve the man, and you improve the workman; improve the workman, and you improve the work. Learn, then, to live above your work, and you come down to the doing of it with intelligence, with pleasure, with ease.

Does it pay? That raises another important question: What are the rewards of labour? For all work we do, there are two kinds of wages—the money wage and the moral wage, the wage of the market and the wage of the man, the one paid in coin of the realm, the other in coin of heaven.

It is a law of God that “the labourer is worthy of his hire.”¹ Our Saviour Himself has ratified

¹ Luke x. 7.

it. To withhold the just hire of the labourer is a sin. "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits."¹ A man's work is his food, and clothes, and house, and books—and everything that makes for his livelihood. Work is a necessary condition of life : it is transformed into money, which again is transformed into those goods which are essential to living.

But if a man works only for the wage, the money wage, he becomes merely a tool among the many tools, a "hand" among the many hands, a wheel or rod or pin in the great producing machine. There is another wage, which we cannot calculate in pounds, shillings, and pence—the moral wage. The worker makes the work, but it is also true that the work makes the worker. The deed reacts upon the doer of it. The good work makes the worker a better man : the bad work makes him worse. The rewards of labour are not all paid in hard cash : they come to us, often unconsciously,

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 6.

but always inevitably, in virtue and self-respect, or their opposites. You put blood, muscle, brain into your work : it pays you back with dignity, self-respect, honour.

It was not in vain that our Saviour said : " Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." ¹ For all labour is a moral discipline. The spirit and manner of our work educates us. Work is an expression of the soul, but it in turn leaves its impression upon the soul. The bad work, the dishonest work, the slovenly work, is not done with you when you have done it. It pays you back in slovenliness, dishonesty, badness of character.

No great work is ever accomplished merely for money. Money may come or may not come, but the great work is always performed for the love of it. Where the commercial spirit dominates, the arts and the sciences and literature decline. And so, in a less perceptible degree but none the less surely, the commonest

¹ John vi. 27.

workman is degraded when he thinks of nothing but the money wage—when he forgets his self-respect.

Virtue, it is said, is its own reward. The same is true of work. Everything we do well brings satisfaction. It satisfies our inner craving or hunger for perfection, for the ideal. Our Lord Himself taught us this, though His followers have been slow to learn it. On one occasion He sat exhausted by the well, whilst His disciples went to buy food. On their return they were surprised that the signs of exhaustion had vanished. They wondered among themselves whether "any man brought Him ought to eat?" What did He say? "I have meat to eat that ye know not of."¹ And what was His meat? What was it that fed and satisfied His soul? Work is food. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."² It is the truth of all life. The task which exhausts the body comes back to feed the soul. We do not need to crave the

¹ John iv. 32.

² *Ibid.* iv. 34.

moral wage. It is paid with promptitude and exactitude by the law of God ; for the higher nature is replenished in virtue and joy by the exhaustion of the lower in work and weariness.

When we look at work in this light it is no longer a curse but a blessing. It is a divine ordinance, a sacrament, which ministers grace to the soul. The sweat of the brow is the worker's aureole, as much a symbol of worth and glory as ever that which circled the head of a saint. It is said of Amiel that he went to his desk as to an altar. In the same spirit we may go to the counter and the bench, the factory and the yard, to do humble tasks in a great spirit, believing that there we serve God and receive the best discipline of our life.

The crowning virtue of all good work is its honesty. Honesty has been declared to be the best policy ; and this is so because there is a moral law underlying all trade and commerce that, sooner or later, the dishonest man goes to the wall.

The worker must, first of all, be honest with

himself. He has a Master in heaven. He is steward of the faculties with which God has endowed him; and to prostitute his talents with careless, eye-serving, dishonest work is to dishonour himself and his God. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."¹ A man's self-respect is at stake in every occupation in which he engages, great or humble. "An artisan, or an artist, or a writer, who does not 'do his best,' is not only an inferior workman, but a bad man."² "The good artisan 'has his heart in his work.' His self-respect makes it necessary for him to respect his technical or artistic capacity, and to do the best by it, without scrimping or lowering."³ The *ca' canny* worker has a low moral ideal, which he cannot confine to his working hours: it finds its way, whether he will or not, into his domestic and social life.

But a man must be honest also with his master. There is many a man who would

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 2.

² Muirhead's *Elements of Ethics*.

³ Dewey's *Outlines of Ethics*.

scruple to steal a farthing, though, without scruple of conscience, he would idle his master's time or waste his master's material. But time is money : material is money. There are other ways of thieving than by taking coin out of another's pocket. You may not put into his pocket that which you ought to have put in. A dishonest worker can never be an honest man.

One of the arch-enemies of honest work is a habit into which many a youth is often unwittingly drawn—the habit of betting and gambling. How can a man who thinks he may obtain by chance that which he should earn by honest toil ever do good work ? His brain is fevered, his interest in his work is impaired, his nerves are jaded by the mad excitement of the uncertainties of the market, the game, or the race. It is a habit which grows like drinking, and is more degrading even than drunkenness. It brutalises a man, makes him the slave of chance, and drives him as with a lash into embezzlement, cruelty, avarice, and often suicide.

This selfish, immoral, and anti-social habit cannot but make a man half-hearted in his work. His thoughts and interests are monopolised in worshipping the great goddess of Luck, and the struggle of a nation for liberty, the massacre of a thousand fellow-men in the cause of religion, the discussion of the policy of the Government, the great questions of municipal and social reform, which lift men into the larger life of manhood, have no concern for him: he grasps his evening paper to scan greedily but one column, that he may learn whether his stocks are up, or his team has conquered, or his horse has won—after that, the great world may wag as it may; it is no business of his! What honest piece of work can the brain of such a man conceive, or the hand of such a man accomplish? Such a habit is not for men, far less for Christian men.

The highest pleasures, the most wholesome excitements of life, may be derived from any work well done. Nothing gives us a keener joy than the use of our faculties up to their highest

point. To have done our best in anything fills us with a pardonable and manly pride. Money, honour, fame, are not to be put in the balance with the self-satisfaction that the day has not passed without a task accomplished up to the measure of our capacity. We forget the joy of our amusements ; the memory of our lower pleasures passes away, or remains to embitter the spirit ; but our work well done is a perennial source of happiness. The voice of heaven does not recount the things which we have enjoyed, but the work which we have accomplished : our work follows us into eternity when we leave our earthly joys behind. “ I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.” ¹

¹ Rev. xiv. 13.

THE PROBLEM OF PLEASURE

“ That pleasure to which good is sacrificed is but a false pleasure.”

JAMES HINTON, *The Mystery of Pain*.

“ If age were strong and youth were wise ! ”

FREYTAG.

“ One spends so many years in learning to be happy.”

GEORGE ELIOT.

“ The impulse towards pleasure, if it be predominant, defeats its own aim.”

SIDGWICK.

“ Dort wo du nicht bist, dort ist das Glück.”

CHAPTER VI

THE PROBLEM OF PLEASURE

THE problem of pleasure has to be considered sooner or later by every man. The older we grow the more it presses upon us. In youth we are unconscious of its issues or urgency. When the blood runs quick and hot in the veins, and desires are hungry for satisfaction, and the world is as a paradise in which there grows "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food,"¹ every restriction of our pleasures seems an arbitrary impediment to the full development of our nature. Why have we desires if they are not to be gratified? Why should there stand "in the midst of the garden" of our life a forbidden tree, which appears to meet the three great needs which God implanted

¹ Gen. ii. 9.

in our being—our appetite, our love of beauty, and our thirst for knowledge—the tree that was “good for food,” and “pleasant to the eyes,” and “to be desired to make one wise”?¹ Is not thirst to be quenched at the fountain? Does not the waving corn appeal and apply to our hunger? Are not our desires and the means of their satisfaction alike from God? Do they not argue a correspondence, in which key fits lock and opens to us the gates of pleasure? Under the tyranny of passion the problem of pleasure is often easily settled by youth. The present, the immediate, the tangible, the sensuous, appeal to him, and while his hungry soul gazes upon the forbidden fruit, his lower nature whispers into his ear, “Ye shall not surely die”;² and once again there occurs the great tragedy of the Fall. Youth does not calculate. The deferred bonus of pleasure does not tempt him. Life’s wealth is for immediate use and enjoyment. He prefers one tree to a whole paradise; one moment’s thrill of satisfaction to a lifetime of calmer joy. He adorns

¹ Gen. iii. 6.

² *Ibid.* iii. 4.

himself with wreaths and chains of passion-flowers, disregarding the warnings of experience that one day they may become chaplets of brass and chains of iron that eat into the flesh.

But passion cannot settle the problem of pleasure. It must be settled in the light of other and quieter days. We have not perpetual youth, and more than youth is concerned in the solution. Life must be reckoned as a whole, one part in relation to another, else the pleasures of an hour may leave an inheritance of misery for years. Childhood must be lived with a view to youth, youth with a view to manhood, and manhood with a view to old age; and all with a view to death, judgment, and eternity. Our desires may all have legitimate satisfactions, but not at all times and in all ways. Life is not chaos, but order; and it is to be ruled not by the genius of confusion, which is passion, but by reason, the genius of law.

In childhood and in youth we may desire and demand the stone as if it were bread, the serpent as if it were a fish, the scorpion as if it were an

egg. In the blindness of passion we cannot distinguish between the apparent and the real, the true and the false. We think it enough to live for the moment : God bids us relate that moment to the years and to eternity. We demand the immediate satisfaction : He forbids the pleasure that embitters the life, for one pleasure should ever be the harbinger of another. In our pleasures we must prognosticate. We must learn how to enjoy, that the faculty of enjoyment be not destroyed. Often our sweetest joys are mingled with acids which corrode the vessels that contain them. We require to be thrifty in our pleasures. We cannot eat our seed-corn and expect a harvest. The prodigal becomes the worn-out rake ; the spendthrift ends in poverty ; the youthful debauchee grows into the blasé old man.

The problem of pleasure is thus one of the greatest questions of youth, and certainly one of the most difficult. We picture to ourselves youth sitting in the chariot of life, setting out upon his career, with eyes of wonder and heart of hope, fearless in spirit, unconscious of danger,

eager to taste the joy of life, around him wonders and delights and fantasies which ravish his quick and greedy senses. Yoked in the chariot are the wild steeds of desire; whilst reason, as yet feeble in hand, holds the reins. Many roads lie in front, all undiscovered by him, though thousands have driven out before him—some smooth, and flowery, and radiant with sunshine; some stony, steep, and passing through the flood and the storm; some vanishing into the mists of the unknown. Everything is fresh, new, wonderful—a golden El Dorado to this coming conqueror. And so it should be; for a youth without hope is as fruitless as a tree without blossom.

But the question is: Whither, where? What is his quest? What is his destination? It is not a question of pleasure merely; it is a question of life. These fleet and fiery steeds, which hurl him into the future, are not of themselves evil spirits. Our desires are essential to our being. They are the moving forces that carry us forward into the good as well

as into the ill of life. To cut the harness and give them the slip is to forfeit the progress and the passion of living, and to sit in a motionless chariot, a coward. To take the reins from the charioteer of reason, and to pass them into the hands of desire, is the part of the fool, who purchases ruin by the wild excitement of a moment. The ascetic and the prodigal are alike wrong, as all extremes are. There is not much to choose between quaffing the full cup of life at a gulp and dashing it scornfully to the ground. We cannot do without our desires: they are the propulsive powers of life, which ever urge us forward; reason, too, is needed, to guide them towards the goal which it has deliberately chosen. But what is the goal? What is the end of life? What is the destination?

Is it pleasure? Time and again in the history of thought the answer has been given that the chief end of life is to pursue pleasure, and to avoid pain; to court the joys of life, and to eschew its sorrows and discomfort and miseries; to find our happiness in the refined and studied

gratification of the Epicurean, or in the no less refined and studied renunciation of the Stoic. In our individual moods the same answer is often returned. The path of self-denial and self-limitation seems at times to be uninviting and thankless and difficult, and virtue stands before us as a pale, bloodless queen, whom youth would never care to woo or win. But these are not the moods of our heroic moments. They come upon us when we lapse into the selfishness of our original savagery, when everything is sacrificed upon the altar of our egotism. In our more exalted moments, in which we see beyond ourselves, and identify our lives with the lives of others and make their good our own, a holy flame is kindled which consumes the passions which consume us, and we look upon their grey ashes with amazement and contempt. No man ever did anything at once great and good who made pleasure, or even happiness, which is a kind of spiritualised pleasure, his end. What poet ever wasted ink in telling what men enjoyed ?

Who ever burst into song in praise of the gourmand or the prodigal? Who ever wished to remember an individual's selfish delights? You cannot fight a strenuous battle, and be careful of your skin. You cannot save others, and save yourself. It is difficult to be a hero lazing on soft cushions or treading soft paths. He who looks for the easiest way will find it hard to get to heaven. When he offers up sacrifice on the altar of pleasure the priest becomes the victim. It is written that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life";¹ and this is eternally true, for life is purchased by abnegation, self-surrender, toil, suffering, martyrdom, death. These strike the highest notes in a man's soul, and call forth the sweetest music of his being. It is by sweat and blood that the heroisms of humanity are awakened and sustained.

True, there is a pleasure in the steep and rugged path of self-denial, and hardship, and toil. The saints and martyrs have a stern

¹ Matt. vii. 14.

and simple joy in flagellations, and self-effacements, and even in death ; but it is a calumny upon human nature to say that pleasure is their aim. It is nothing more than an incident by the way. Their motive is something else and something higher—holiness or truth. Pleasure comes to them without the seeking, a surprise, an extra, a gift thrown in, for their fidelity to higher aims.

But pleasure is not only not the chief end of life, but in the nature of things it cannot be. It is part of the constitution of things that we are balked in our enterprise if we attempt to pursue pleasure for its own sake. This is the paradox of pleasure, by which the Moral Governor of the world has contrived to keep our aims high and wholesome. Who has not been surprised by his first experience of this old paradox ? Pursue pleasure, thinking of nothing else, and it eludes your grasp ; the more zealously you try to seize it, the more surely and swiftly it escapes. The most miserable moments of our life are often those in which we had promised our-

selves the most ecstatic joys. Our deliberation, our eagerness, our self-consciousness, act like solvents upon all happiness. Pleasure, like sleep, is not to be won by thinking about it. It comes to those who have been thinking of, and toiling for, something else and something better. Hence the lover of pleasure is the most disappointed of men: his wooings and blandishments and addresses are rejected with a saucy irony. The elusive maiden leads him on, but ever escapes his embrace. But when she sees a man pursuing high and noble ends, she approaches him by stealth, falls into his arms, and embraces him.

And how do we explain this paradox? Partly by the fact that pleasure is not something in itself. We cannot find pleasure as an abstraction, detached and separate: we must find it in something—in thinking high thoughts, in gratifying low desires, in dreaming of great ideals, in remembering things well done. For that reason we cannot get pleasure pure and simple. It is an accompaniment. It comes

to us in relation to other things, which serve as its medium or channel. As we cannot have colour but in something coloured, or sound except through something that sounds, so to get pleasure we must find it in something. He pursues, therefore, a phantom who tries to get pleasure by itself. To find it he must not seek it : he must seek something else.

And, moreover, though pleasure is in something else, it is there only as a hidden treasure which one may find and another may miss. Pleasure is always the great discovery which tests a man's quality. You place a good book in the hands of a youth. He is its critic, but it is also his. His criticism of it is a criticism of himself. He may find no pleasure in its truth : another does ; and so the pleasure is there and not there, according to the mind which peruses its pages. There is pleasure in a thought-creative picture of Watts—for you there is ; but another man of lower tastes prefers the illustrations of the *Police News*. One man finds pleasure in drink, but another

deems it a poison against which his moral nature revolts. Nature smiles on some souls and frowns upon others ; but that depends upon the thoughts with which we observe and interpret her. There is pleasure in all things, but it is *we* who must find it. We can never tell what will give pleasure to a man until we know the nature of the man himself.

Now, if the end of life were pleasure, all our standards of moral worth were subverted. One man finds his pleasure in dog-fancying, another in philanthropy ; one in lust, another in purity ; one in gambling, another in honest labour ; one in money, another in art ; one in grubbing with the muck-rake, another in soaring into heaven on wings of beatific vision. But if the end be pleasure, and each man attains it in pursuing the object of his individual choice, then one man is as good as another. But who can subscribe to such a doctrine of the devil ? Is it all the same how we are happy, if we are happy ? No. We judge men by the quality of their pleasures. Between the pleasure of a beast and

that of a seraph there are infinite degrees ; and the pleasure which a man enjoys is the index of his character. We cannot make pleasure the aim of life without disturbing all the moral values upon which our judgments of good and evil are based.

Besides, is it not the case that our most exquisite pleasures are often purchased by our pains, just as our most exhausting pains are purchased by our pleasures ? When our Saviour wished to impress upon His disciples the joy they would experience after the pangs of disappointment and grief were displaced by His resurrection and return to glory and power, to what did He liken it ? It was to the mystery of motherhood, in which joy is the fruit of suffering. The mystery of nature had to His mind a spiritual counterpart or parallel. " And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And

ye now therefore have sorrow : but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you : ”¹ and this is so because in the highest plane of life suffering is the penalty of love ; and love has the divine faculty of transfiguring its sufferings into joy, as the oyster is said to transmute its pains into pearls. “ We could never have felt the joy, never had even the idea of love,” says James Hinton, “ if sacrifice had been impossible to us. In our truest and intensest happiness, that which is otherwise felt as pain is present. Pain, we may say, is *latent* in our highest state. It lies hidden and unfelt in the form of devoted sacrifice.”

Was not this the secret by which Paul was the happiest and the most hopeful of men, although providence by storm, shipwreck, imprisonment, peril, and sword, seemed to conspire against him and his ministry ? He was willing to pass through the furnace that he might pass into the Divine Presence, and the price which he paid for his blessedness gave a keener edge

¹ John xvi. 20-22.

to his joy. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake."¹

We get out of line with life in all its higher moods if we expect to find pleasure without suffering. We are only seeking a light that has no shadow. We feel that we have not stolen our pleasures, but have come by them as honest men, when we have bought them by agony and blood and tears. Even our Saviour did not exempt Himself from that stern law of our mortal experience. He saw no way to His holy inheritance of joy but by the bleeding brow and the broken heart. He had to endure "the contradiction of sinners," and to resist "unto blood," when "for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame." But His joy was not pursued as an end in itself. It was only the inseparable accompaniment of that end, which was that He might "be set down

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

at the right hand of the throne of God.”¹ For how could we think of the attainment of that end if it should bring sorrow? Like all high moral ends, it brings pleasure even though, and perhaps because, it is purchased by pain.

Now, considering all these things—that pleasure eludes us when we think about it and pursue it as an end; that it is nothing in itself, but is only found in the endeavour to attain some other object; that it is not even in things, but in ourselves, who find it often through a process of pain—considering all these things, what is the chief end of life? It cannot be pleasure. It must be sought in some larger sphere—in man himself. Self-realisation; the perfect development of the whole man; the actualisation of the ideal in the individual, by joy, and sorrow, and labour, and rest, and pleasure, and duty, and suffering—that is the high moral end for which we live, and all things must be judged as good or ill according as they promote or hinder that end.

Pleasure, then, is not the end of life. At best,

¹ Heb. xii. 2-4.

it is but an incident, which may be present or absent, in the pursuit of something higher. There are pleasures and pleasures, some high, some low, some permitted, some forbidden. How are we to reckon their quality and their value? How are we to find the highest?

The value of everything we enjoy depends upon the contribution it makes to the supreme end of our life—our self-realisation. Whatever pleasure helps us to wholesomeness of body, purity of affection, soundness of judgment, right direction of will, is to be welcomed; whatever hinders us in these things is to be shunned. Everything, however, in its time and place and degree, must work harmoniously to the one end: the bringing out of the manhood in the man. It is obvious, therefore, that there are some pleasures which are unworthy of us. A pig may revel in filth, but a man must not. There are pleasures which drag us down to the pig-level, and the more the beast lives within us, the more the man dies. "I should like to know," said Jean Paul Richter, "whether being happy

through passion is aught else than warming one's self by the aid of a burning glass." Every degrading pleasure destroys us in the very act of gratification.

And again, pleasure must not hinder pleasure. There is often a tendency to lop-sidedness in the pursuit of things harmless in themselves—a tendency against which, in the interests of manhood, we must protest. The student may pursue the love of learning so as to cultivate the intellect at the expense of the body; and, when the mental machine is perfected, he may discover that he has no steam to drive it for the accomplishment of great ends. It is the penalty he pays for one-sidedness. Art may be pursued for its own sake, and in his thirst for beauty of colour and form the artist may have starved the intellect; and when his technique is at its best, he may be left with no uplifting ideas to express upon the marble or the canvas. Nature avenges herself upon everyone who violates the rules of proportion in satisfying her claims. In the same way, youth may give himself in-

ordinately to the love of sports and may develop into a fine animal—an Apollo in grace or a Hercules in strength ; he may become an expert in his feet or his fingers, to the admiration of the sporting world ; but he may forget his brain, and when the days of active pleasure are past, he has no capacity for those high pleasures which are germane to the quieter days of manhood,—the good book, the elevating comradeship of thought, the pursuit of great social ideals,—and he is condemned to live in the pleasures and achievements of the past, unprepared for the joys which cheer us when middle age has come. He pays his price for not keeping before him the cultivation of his whole nature. It is the old sin of excess, against which the Greeks protested. Moderation, balance, respect for a well-rounded manhood,—that old doctrine needs still to be preached, lest the surfeit of pleasure in one thing should destroy our capacity of pleasure in another.

And this leads us to observe that in pleasure, as in all departments of life, we need forethought.

We must not linger too long in, or devote ourselves too eagerly to, the pleasures which are appropriate to one stage of life, lest we incapacitate ourselves for those of the next. We must anticipate. It is a beautiful thing to see a child at play with its toys. It lives in a world of romance and make-believe, in which it both expresses and educates its dawning intellect. But the child must learn the alphabet before the toy-stage is done, so as to find higher pleasure in the world of thought upon which it is entering. It puts away "childish things" when the faculty for enjoying them has spent itself; but meanwhile its parents must anticipate and prepare it for the displacement of one pleasure by another. Youth also has pleasures appropriate to its stage of life. The outdoor sports, the trial of skill, the contest with his fellows, are needed for the development of his manhood; but he must not linger too long nor too devotedly in this world of active enjoyment. He must anticipate the day when the bodily faculties need less exercise and

get less and less joy from this type of exertion. He must give himself to work and study even in the midst of all his sport, so as to be ready for the more serious obligations of life when they come upon him. And even in manhood we must anticipate and prepare for old age, when strenuous play and work are alike impossible by the natural decay of the faculties which once found pleasure in both. The most pathetic sight in human life is an old man, who has outlived his pleasures and his tasks, sitting at the fireside in joyless senility, without happy memories of the past or happy hopes of the future. The pleasures of memory and hope are the solace of old age ; and for the enjoyment of both in the end of our days, we must begin early to provide by storing up a lifelong record of high thoughts cherished, noble ideals pursued, opportunities of kindness timely embraced, and helpful work accomplished, as well as by devotion and service to God and our Saviour Jesus Christ throughout our long and varied years. It is only then we can look back upon a well-

spent life and enjoy it as "a goodly heritage" of our memory; it is only then we can look forward to a life which is even better than that which has been passed in preparing for it. He who has lived thus needs never mourn that life is done and pleasure gone. He feels that the end is but the beginning; and, passing hence in good hope, he can say, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." ¹

¹ Ps. xvi. 11.

AN APOLOGY FOR AMUSEMENTS

"How much of the pleasure of society, and indeed of all amusements, depends on their power of making us forget ourselves! The substratum of life is sad, and few men who reflect on the dangers and uncertainties that surround it can find it even tolerable without much extraneous aid. The first and most vital of these aids is to be found in the creation of strong interests."

LECKY'S *Map of Life*.

"Though the hen should sit all day she could only lay one egg, and, besides, she would not have picked up material for another."

THOREAU.

"Business should be chosen for the sake of leisure; and things necessary and useful for the sake of the beautiful in conduct."

ARISTOTLE.

"Be the pleasure what it may, the unbroken continuity brings satiety."

SPENCER'S *Data of Ethics*.

CHAPTER VII

AN APOLOGY FOR AMUSEMENTS

IT is not easy to give a definition of amusements. The boundary lines between work, pleasure, and amusement are so changeable and evanescent that it were a hard task to ride the marches. Indeed, to attempt the task is almost futile, for our work and pleasure and amusement are not stationary things like the woods, and fields, and meadows through which we may run our fences ; they are more like the birds and the beasts, the fairies and the flower-seeds, which ignore all our human attempts at delimitation. The work of some is the amusement of others. The savage hunts to get his dinner. The dinner of the county gentleman is in his larder, and he hunts to get an appetite. To kill the bear and the wolf was at one time

the serious work of the shepherd for the protection of his flock. Now we amuse ourselves by scouring the country with horses and dogs to slay a poor fox for the glory of its brush! The carpenter finds his amusement in the work of the gardener; whilst the gardener lays down the pick and spade to whittle a boat for his children. An occupation is thus neither a work nor an amusement in itself: our attitude of mind determines which it shall be to us.

Our amusements are our more trifling and volatile pleasures—the flowers of the feast which lighten the table, not the food which loads it. The matter-of-fact, prosaic, man may smile at the decorations, and say that he does not eat the flowers. They satisfy, however, a certain hunger of the mind, and help to beautify the common act of feeding. Our amusements are the grace-notes in the song of life—not necessary in themselves, but embellishing and enriching the music, which otherwise were too severe. If we always spoke with scientific precision, and said only those things

which needed to be said, a few sentences a day might suffice many of us. Life might thus gain in seriousness and exactitude, but, for want of the hundred and one trifles and nothingnesses of speech which spice our more necessary intercourse, one of the charms of life would disappear. So, from a utilitarian point of view, our amusements may seem to count for nothing in the earning of bread and butter, but they keep the mind and body in good temper and make them more fit as instruments for the work which must be done.

We have often to work in order to amuse ourselves—for amusement seldom comes to us without exertion. The tree of pleasure does not drop its fruit into the mouth of the idler who lies beneath its shade. But the work which we undertake in order to find our amusement is voluntary work—not done for hire or under compulsion. The labourer is his own master in this case, and pays himself with the pleasurable thoughts which he coins in the very act of exerting himself. For, after all,

the word "amusement" carries its own philosophy in its bosom. To "muse," or "amuse," is to detach ourselves from our common tasks, and to stand with gaping mouth, or muzzle¹ absorbed in something which so agreeably entertains us as to make us oblivious of everything around. When the mind is disengaged from the tasks and cares which strain or oppress it, and becomes engaged in new and pleasant activity, we are properly amused. The charm of fishing, or golf, or football, or sketching, lies in the fact that we are switched away from a tract of the journey which has its tunnels, and smoke, and grime, and monotony, into a line which leads through scenes in which all these things are for the time forgotten by being displaced by agreeable and absorbing interests which have neither obligation nor pay.

Amusement is thus a form of work by which we obtain relaxation from work. It is a change of occupation. Idleness is not amusement: it

¹ Muse, amuse, and muzzle are all derived from the same root.

is the hardest work of an honest man. To "kill time" is the sport of coxcombs and fools. Better to go to bed and sleep the sleep of the innocent, if not of the just, than to murder time, which is the mother of all beneficence. We escape from exertion by exertion. Sprinting or football is as hard work as hewing stones, sawing wood, or building ships; the strenuous game is enjoyed because it is a change of labour and a relief from a constant strain. Set a man to run or play football every working day of the year, and he would be glad to break stones by the roadside by way of amusement.

Our amusements are only the condiments which impart relish to the feast of life. They are not the serious business of life, but they give zest to honourable work. Mustard is good, but who would think of dining on mustard? Our amusements cease to amuse when we have no work from which to escape. When we make amusement the business of life, we must take to some task or another in order to amuse ourselves. The recreations of

hard-working men only bore the idle rich; for both rich and poor acquire the right or, indeed, the capacity for enjoyment only when they purchase it by honest toil.

Amusement is one of the fundamental needs of our nature. The monotony of a level road and a constant pull kills even horses. We need change and variety in our occupations. Brain and muscle cannot stand an unbroken strain in the one direction. To disengage ourselves from one activity by engaging ourselves in another is the secret of healthful and happy labour. In this way we recreate one set of faculties by allowing it to rest and to repair its loss, whilst we exercise another set and prevent it from rusting. Legitimate amusement is recreation.

Youth requires no apology for its amusements. In that rough and stormy passage across channel that lies between the sheltered harbour of childhood and the calm inland waters of maturity there are many risks and dangers, but youth has the inborn faculty

of discounting them and turning the risks into discipline and the dangers into blessings. We need not hold a controversy with human nature by denying young life its amusements. They are the anodynes by which the growing pains of adolescence are soothed. For seriousness and wisdom come upon us by surprise as body and mind emerge from the transforming period of youth and settle down into the quieter life of maturity. Old men, when looking back on their own youth, would like to hasten the process of transformation and to improve upon Nature's arrangements by putting old heads on young shoulders. They would tunnel the channel, and have us steam through by express in the dark. They forget that the sea passage, and even the storms we encounter, have their exhilaration and discipline, and that we learn wisdom by the hardships we endure and enjoy. Sea-sickness even may be part of our education.

Outdoor games are the favourite amusement of youth. At first we may attribute this to fashion, or convention, or imitation, but when

we think of it there are deeper reasons to be found in the nature of things. Athletic exercise, social enjoyment, are demanded by the very conditions of young life.

Youth, regarded physically, is manhood in the making. The whole body is passing through a period of disturbance and growth. Hence the necessity for physical exercise. Waste and repair take place with rapidity, and nature makes the process pleasant by driving the youth, by an inner and irresistible impulse, into the open air to sport himself with his fellows. Here he exhausts his superfluous energy, and Nature provides fresh supplies to meet the demands made upon her. Thus, whilst the youth enjoys himself, all unconscious of her design, Nature is quietly building up the man. At times youth seems prodigal of his energies, but Nature has a fine way of punishing the youth who is miserly of his strength, and of being prodigal to her prodigals.

Again, it is a law of the individual life, as of that of nations, that in the earlier stages

of development action predominates. Our first lessons in life are learned by doing things : afterwards we reflect upon them. To the youth the concrete, the actual, the visible, the external is almost everything. It is in contact with these that his senses are awakened and the materials for thinking in after life are stored up. These form the occasion for his activity and enjoyment. It is in the open-air world that he seeks and finds his amusements ; for as yet he is, for the most part, a stranger to the inner world of ideas, to which in later years he escapes from his toils and cares. In this outdoor life he works with hands, and eyes, and ears, and feet, and his work is a luxury. All the while, however, he is busy furnishing the invisible house of thought in which memory stores up her impressions and generalisations. By and by, when the house is in order and his eyes are not so keen and his feet not so fleet, he will learn to sit down within, and to dream and live, going out occasionally only for an airing.

But youth demands the outdoor games with his fellows for another reason. To the child home is the world ; to the youth the world is home ; to the man home is again the world, but enriched with the treasure he has brought back from his wanderings outside. The child is a subordinate, a dependent, who takes his food and even his ideas just as they are provided for him. He feels no need for any society beyond the family circle, or for any esteem and affection and appreciation beyond that of his immediate friends. But when he enters the strange world of youth, new and larger ideas dawn upon his mind : the home seems to contract around his expanding life ; social instincts are stirring within him and urging him to new friendships ; the fledgling experiences an inner compulsion to try its wings, to go out and forage for itself. The youth has begun to realise that he has a life beyond the family, a world beyond the home, a destiny apart from his parents. He now counts for one ; he is an individual, but an individual who needs society and counts for something in it.

Let us ever remember the loneliness of youth — that time of introspection, of self-criticism, of intellectual storms and earthquakes, which should never be forgotten by those who would sympathise with young life. It is that sense of solitude which ever remains most vividly in our memory as surprising the soul at that period in which we had outgrown the old relationships, but had not found the new. It is then that the youth stands in need of companionship in order to afford him social support. He longs for the esteem of his fellows, and is hypersensitive of their opinion of him. He delights in pleasing others and in their being pleased with him. He cannot afford to stand alone, to be eccentric, to be unlike other youths, to be suspected or despised. He must dress as others dress, do as others do, admire what others admire, and speak as others speak. He has been initiated into that stern caste of youth which has its unwritten laws that must be complied with, and its inexorable penalties which the caste-breaker must endure. It is because outdoor sports are the natural

amusements of young life that they afford the needed escape from the loneliness, and introspection, and sadness incidental to adolescence. Here he is able to win admiration by his skill, respect by his endurance, esteem by his fairness, and even love by his kindliness of disposition. Here he gets the social satisfaction and support for which his nature craves, and knows that he counts for somebody to others in the organism of society in which he finds himself to be a member.

But amusements serve high ethical ends in the economy of youth. A young man learns many virtues in the field of manly sport. A code of honour springs up in all games in which young men associate, and it is usually enforced with rigour and justice. In this way, his amusements serve as a discipline to his character. If a young man has any taint of surliness, or meanness, or selfishness, or trickery in his nature, it is soon discovered and knocked out of him, or he is knocked out of the game. Young men have a savage delight in enforcing honour and fair play, and none know better than they how to

punish the offender. From each other they endure chastisement which no schoolmaster would dare to inflict, and regard it with that reverence which men pay to the verdict of a court of justice.

Our most serviceable virtues are often learned at play—promptitude, decision, endurance, self-control, silence, imperturbability, courage, unselfishness, co-operation, resolution. Our schools have no class of morals; but the cricket-field and the football-field and the gymnasium supply the lack, and scholars become their own teachers in these high matters. But the virtues which are thus learned cannot be confined in practice to the field of sport. They are stored up as habits, and, forming into character, they radiate into all spheres of commercial and social life. Our colonies, our missions, our legislature, our industries benefit by the lessons which the youth of our land have learned in their amusements. The young man who has played honourably in his team, never taking a mean advantage of his fellow, is not likely to degrade his life into a low and selfish game.

Amusements and recreations are of many kinds, of many degrees of moral value, suitable to different dispositions and to different stages of life. The choice of our amusements is therefore important. They may be outdoor or indoor, social or personal, evanescent or lasting. The former are usually the choice of youth, the latter of manhood ; or rather, we pass through the former into the latter as stages in acquiring the difficult art of enjoyment. Not that the one set of enjoyments is exclusive of the other ; for a man at any time of life may trespass on both spheres : that depends upon the man. Some men, however, never learn the art, and find their only amusement in change of work. Others, who have escaped from active employment, find their amusement in going back to the scenes of their labour. Boswell tells us of a tallow-chandler in London who gave up business and retired to his country house. But he desired to know the melting-days, so that he might come back into the City to assist. The most unsavoury process of his former occupation became the most

enjoyable relief from the laborious idleness of his retirement and luxury.

All amusements, however, are not equally praiseworthy when we keep before us the end of life as the highest realisation of our manhood. We may lay it down as a rule that those amusements alone are worthy of us which make us healthier, saner, wiser men, more able to discharge the serious duties of our calling ; whilst those are unworthy which morally or physically debase or exhaust us, or interfere unduly with legitimate work.

The true object of all amusement is to restore the balance of jaded nature, so that we may return to our work refreshed and recreated. Even amusements which are harmless in themselves must be dismissed if they attain a predominance in our thought and life which interferes with our vocation as men. For man has an inherent quality which must be respected by being kept in view as the chief end of all his culture—the quality of manhood. His amusements are only the accidents and acces-

sories of his life ; and, if he is distinguished only for these, he has missed the mark. It is good that the soldier whets his bayonet and his sword, but if he funks the fight it is useless. He is not a cutler, but a soldier ; or rather, the one in order to be the other. You do not praise a lawyer by boasting of his qualities as a golfer, or a minister by holding him up as a fine after-dinner speaker, or a shoemaker by asserting his gifts as a runner, or a man by saying anything of him except that he is a man, true to the qualities of his manhood. When the orators praised Philip for his eloquence, and his beauty, and his capacity for liquor, Demosthenes turned these things off as trifles. "The first," he said, "was the quality of a sophist, the second of a woman, the third of a sponge ; and not one of them could do any credit to a king." So to wish to be praised for nothing more or better than football, or billiards, or sprinting, is to view life out of perspective, to transform means into ends, and to pride ourselves upon things that are

not germane to the quality of manhood. Our amusements may help us to be virtuous, but they themselves are not virtues, nor are they to be elevated above their ancillary position as, at best, accomplishments.

The choice of amusements should be determined by the needs of our nature. Youth, as we have seen, takes instinctively to outdoor games of a more strenuous kind, in order to hasten the processes of waste and repair in the building up of his physical constitution, as well as to gratify his social propensities. Older men, whose brains are overstrained by the serious work of life, take to the golf links to throw off the monotony and exhaustion of their daily occupation. The worried betake themselves to music to soothe their jaded nerves ; whilst those who soar into the cloudland of abstract thought come down for disengagement of mind into the study of concrete things of the earth—chemistry, botany, or natural history. In this way, men preserve the balance and respect the general health of their whole being.

Those amusements are always most appropriate which have not only a retrospective value in view of work done, but a prospective value in view of work to be accomplished. The amusements of children are often anticipations of their work as men and women. See how these young merchants buy and sell, keeping shop, and giving values to mean things, as if commerce were a game! The boy drives his engine, rides his horse, teaches his school, and shoulders his gun into many a bloodless battlefield, long before he is an engineer, or teamster, or teacher, or soldier. The girl in her doll-world undertakes by anticipation the cares, and joys, and duties, and sorrows of motherhood. The intuitions of children teach us something of the philosophy of amusement, as not only a relief from the realities of the world which oppress us, but a preparation for those realities from which we dare not, and perhaps cannot, escape.

The abuses of amusement are generally to be found in excess. Amusement to be enjoyed

must be earned. When the thought of a duty unperformed haunts the conscience, the game is up. We may then throw down the bat, or shoulder the clubs, and go home to purchase a good conscience. We are claiming more than we deserve. He who shirks his obligations for his pleasures is no better than an idler sitting in his back parlour reading a neurotic novel, not at home to the bailiff who is pulling his front-door bell. Every pleasure which tempts us to shirk our duty should itself be shirked.

Sometimes our amusements run beyond their measure, and unfit us for our work. We may intoxicate the mind with the passion for play, till labour becomes distasteful. We denounce rich men for adding field to field and forest to forest for their pleasures, but who will denounce poorer men for adding hour to hour and day to day, till great tracts of time are monopolised by their games? The earth is impoverished by the one as by the other. There is need for protest at present against the encroachments of pleasure. Football may become

a craze, till the thoughts of a young man are concerned with little else. We must not keep our brains in our boots. Our feet have their place in the economy of life, but they must not play the head. Let us remember the rebuke : The Lord "taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man." Our amusements may exhaust as well as exhilarate, may surfeit as well as satisfy ; but when we overstep the measure, we fall into intemperance, and kill the life under the plea of caring for the health.

Nature avenges all breaches of measure and moderation. She lets us have our way, but some day she renders her account and calls up the debt. We may purchase short spasms of greedy pleasure as if the future were uncertain, but we pay for them with long spells of jaded nerves and ennui. Sometimes she allows us to run up an enormous bill, as if she conspired with our folly and condoned our prodigality, but at last she comes down upon us and makes us bankrupt. For the love of pleasure, when it overreaches the mean, is like the love of

wine : the more we take, the more we would take ; the more our sensations are stimulated, the weaker is the response and the more the stimulant requires to be increased ; till at last the climax is reached, and outraged nature declines our further imposition. There is not much to choose between the blasé and the drunkard. Both are played out. They have prematurely exhausted their pleasures — and themselves. It is said that at one of his feasts Alexander promised that the man who drank most should be crowned for his victory. Pro-machus drank four measures of wine, and carried off the crown. The crown was worth a talent — but he survived it only three days ! When the sanctities of our nature are violated by our pleasures, she has her revenge. There are crowns with which she will not permit us to adorn or desecrate the living brow.

It is not to be wondered at that the excess of amusement is found chiefly among our city-bred youth. It is a result of the city temperament, restless and never rested, excitable and

demanding more excitement. The drab life which many have to live amid dirt and drudgery must find its escape somehow. When life becomes intolerable in its monotony, and the horizon so contracted that there is little to hope for in the distant future, the buoyant expectancy of pleasure which is innate to the young heart grasps at the immediate excitement of sport, and betting, and dancing, and drink, by way of relief, and prematurely exhausts itself. The neurotic temperament is not easily satisfied either in the measure or the kind of its amusement. Its appetite and its taste are unnatural. It is not enough that the game be played for the love of it; the excitement must be heightened by the crowd, by the victory of the favourite team in the professional display of skill, and all must be spiced still further with the thrilling uncertainties of the bet. The simplicity and naturalness of life's amusements are lost when men get out of touch with Nature. The heavens with their quiet stars are uninteresting: they must be lit up

with a pyrotechnic display, coloured and explosive and noisy ! The song of the mavis and blackbird, and the homely chirrup of the robin in the public park, must be augmented and drowned by the brazen music of the band ! It is thus we meet the pathetic and alarming restlessness of our poor distracted city humanity, alleviating the symptoms without curing the disease. The restless nerves are not rested, the excited brain is not soothed, the exhausted body is not recreated—and the type degenerates.

We do not say this is wrong. It offers a brief relief to the individual, but it does nothing to arrest the slow decline of the race. What we need is to get back more easily, or altogether, to the land ; to calm our minds by watching the slow and simple processes of Nature ; to get away from the ephemeral and artificial interests and excitements of crowded streets by coming into closer touch with the great and eternal laws of the heavens and the earth ; to see the wider horizon, and to tune the fevered

pulse to the measured movements of the seasons and the stars.

It may be asked whether such an apology for amusements is demanded by the claims of the Christian life. It is true the Bible gives no instruction regarding these things. But it is always dangerous to argue too much from the silence of Scripture, which deals with the cardinal principles of human life. We are not told what to eat or drink, or how to play ; but we are told to do all things to the glory of God. Everything which tends to make life sweeter, cleaner, happier, and more wholesome has the sanction of God. The laugh and the smile, the witticism and the game are not enjoined, but neither are they forbidden. When we are asked if amusement is consistent with the Christian life, our answer is that whatever adds to the value of life can never detract from the value of the Christian life.

THE BLESSING OF FRIENDS

"We take care of our health, we lay up money, we make our roof tight and our clothing sufficient, but who provides wisely that he shall not be wanting in the best property of all—friends?"

EMERSON.

"He did not choose," said Macaulay, "to eat salt with a man for whom he could not say a good word in all companies."

"I value and trust those who praise my aspirations rather than my performances."

THOREAU.

"There is no life so commonplace
But, if you search it, you shall find
A secret chamber of the mind
Enshrining some fair sainted face,
Where worship still is done in tears,
That freshen the grey dusky years."

WALTER C. SMITH'S *Raban*.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLESSING OF FRIENDS

OUR first lessons in life are learned from the living model. To conform to the type in our immediate vicinity is the earliest demand made upon our nature. To do as others do, to think as others think, comes first; we must be true to the inheritance of example. The rudiments of life and conduct are learned by imitation.

The faculty of imitation is strongest in the earliest stages of life. Children have a genius for mimicry. Sounds, gestures, the habits and eccentricities of speech and gait, are easily copied and acquired. The more serious engagements of their elders—the marriage, the funeral, the nursing of children, the schoolroom, the shop, the battlefield—form the basis of many of their games. The child is first a copyist:

originality comes by surprise. We learn our apprenticeship by watching the journeyman, and doing as he does ; when we have reached his proficiency by imitation, we may then strike out for ourselves.

The same faculty of imitation remains with us in youth. The living model is still the principal formative force. The boy emerges from the initiatory school of the family, in which he has learned the rudiments of life by imitating his superiors, and passes into the secondary school of comradeship, in which he moves among his equals. But he is still an imitator. Persons, not ideas, govern him. The circle of friends in which he finds himself has its code of honour, its distinctive ideals, its type of manhood, to which he must conform. He has become the citizen of a little republic with its own distinctions and privileges of rank, its own pains and penalties, the former of which are attained by fidelity to the accepted standard of life, as the latter are incurred by any want of conformity. Singularity and *gaucherie* are

crimes as severely punished as positive wickednesses.

The instinct for friendship and the impulse of imitation can never be omitted in the study of youth. A man seldom rises above the average of his friends. They have a finger in his destiny during the most plastic period of his life. Gradually, should a youth have strength of mind and character, the influence of the living model declines, and, if he has entered the abstract world of thought and has felt the authority of great principles, he escapes from the tyranny of his little republic, and becomes in his turn a leader, a revolutionist, who creates new ideals and founds a new republic.

Comrades are the educators of youth. They are his books, his teachers, his mentors, his critics. After fifty a man makes few friends. He has crossed the summit, and his outlook has changed. On ascending the hill he craves the company of comrades; on descending he keeps company with his thoughts, his memories, and his hopes. Hence youth is gregarious, com-

munal; age solitary, individualistic. Imitation governs the one, originality the other; and often those who have learned most from their friends can teach most to their neighbours.

It is a good thing to have good friends, but not to be dominated too much or too long by their example. When we have learned to imitate the best, we must pass on to do for ourselves; and our best, if it be indeed our own, the free expression of our being, is better than the best imitation. However long we may keep or prize our friends, if we live our life true to all that is true and good within us, the sense of loneliness will steal upon us as we advance upon our journey. To the strongest natures persons count less than principles, and to be true to great principles leads us often into strange and desert paths. "The lions walk alone: the jackals herd together."

Youth is prodigal. The world and life are before him; and, because time, energy, and wealth are regarded as unlimited possibilities, he spends with a regal magnificence. The unexplored

mine has infinite wealth. A miserly youth and a prodigal old man are unlovely because unnatural. The friendships of youth are generous. It is a time of confidences. He must share even his secrets ; he must see his inner life externalised in another. The self-contained, self-sufficient young man is usually a prig or a fool. He has retired too early into the world of abstractions. We have to learn to live among men before we venture to live above them.

Amiel has defined friendship as "affinity of nature founded on the worship of the same ideal." It is the old definition of Amos put in another way : "Can two walk together, except they be agreed ? " ¹ The elective affinities, those subtle desires and aspirations which unconsciously attract us to each other—it is these that bring, and keep, us together for good or for ill. It is not necessary to friendship that there be sameness of nature, provided there be similarity. As there are chemicals that never can be fused, so there are men who can never be friends. I see in another

¹ Amos iii.

that which I am not, but would be : he is my friend. He sees in me something that will promote an end of his nature : I am his. We may be different in circumstance, in habit, in temper, in education and taste, but, beneath all these accidental distinctions, there must be an essential similarity of spirit in order to form a true friendship. When the Psalmist lamented a broken friendship, he found the bitterness of the rupture in the fact that community of spirit and identity of interest had ceased : " It was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." ¹

On the discovery of our affinities, our differences may disappear and our former enmities be forgotten. This is true of friendships good and bad. How can two men love Christ and hate one another ? The vision of the new ideal, when it breaks in upon souls at variance, disposes old quarrels. Hatred becomes superficial when confronted by that fundamental love of Christ.

¹ Ps. lv. 13, 14.

The worship of the ideal in Christ is the basis of all holy friendships.

But the same law may act in an opposite direction. The basest friendships are formed upon the love of the evil, which is but another name for the hatred of the good. Here also the elective affinities may draw souls together which were once apart. The unholy alliance of Pilate and Herod finds in this its explanation. The day of the despisal and scourging of Jesus was their day of reconciliation. The souls of these two men coalesced as if they had stumbled across each other in hell: "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together, for before they were at enmity between themselves."¹ In these two men we see the bathos of human friendship—the friendship that is founded on the common hatred of the good.

The highest friendships are based upon the deepest spiritual affinities. Our Saviour Himself has given this His confirmation in one of those strong utterances which teach us by their very

¹ Luke xxiii. 12.

exaggeration. Surely the acme of friendship is reached in the relation of a man to his mother, and brother, and sister! What friendship can be more pure, more disinterested, more sacred? And yet, even these friends are on a lower plane than those who are one with us in spirit. We are members of another family, in which the present ties of blood are superseded, though not in any way relaxed. "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."¹ The words of our Lord teach us that the flower of friendship is reached only when it is rooted in the holiness of obedience.

This leads us to consider the demands of friendship. Our best friends are those who make the highest demands upon our nature, who bring out our best thoughts, emotions, and virtues, and turn our prose into poetry, our

¹ Matt. xii. 48-50.

water into wine. This is at once the best response we can offer and the highest reward that we can receive in the interchange of the offices of friendship. "In our daily intercourse with men," said Thoreau, "our nobler faculties are dormant and suffered to rust. None will pay us the compliment to expect nobleness from us. Though we have gold to give, they demand only copper."

The friend who takes us as we are, and expects nothing better, is never a true friend. Our real self is not the actual, but the possible. The ideal is the reality. It is not what we are, but what we are becoming, that is important. We do not wish people to take us for what we are : we wish them to anticipate, to expect, to inspire. The tree may be but a gnarled stump at present, but it will not always be poor and colourless. The spring will come, and the latent life will be called forth in its glory of blossom. My friend must not be content with me as I am, any more than I am content with myself. He is a better friend who makes me feel that noble discontent

which is the presage of better things. I expect my friend to let me bask in the sunshine of his appreciation, which enables me to feel the pulse of fresh life beating in my breast and to experience the growth pains of higher virtues and activities. He must not mind me, but mind what I mind, and help me to its attainment. My ends are everything : my present condition is of little moment. He must see the flower in the insignificant seed, the butterfly in the unshapely chrysalis. "Our actual friends," it has been well said, "are but distant relations of those to whom we are pledged."

Those friendships which demand the best we can give are of more worth than gold. The friend who has no gracious extortion in his dealings with me, speaks to me with a withering breath. There is no spring in his words. But a good friend, who loves my destiny better than myself, is oppressive in his exactions. He strengthens me by exhausting my strength in thought or action. He makes me pay toll for his friendship by fresh exertions. He will not

let me sit down till the summit is reached. He will not suffer the mine to be closed till the seam of gold which he has discovered is worked out. His tyranny is upon me. He demands that I discourse music to him of which I never dreamt I was capable till his hands swept the chords of my soul. He seems always pleased, but is never satisfied.

This silent and insatiable demand of affection saves many a man from a life of commonplace. Some men never know their capabilities till a friend discovers them. When a great soul bids us to his feast it is a great opportunity. His friendship overawes us, and we steal to our place to sit down as an unworthy, abashed, guest, "in the lowest room." But he sees into the depths of our desires and interprets the dumb yearnings of our nature, and by and by shocks us into honour by saying, "Friend, go up higher."¹ We are discovered by the strange demand, and never afterwards can we be the same. Our dormant higher nature

¹ Luke xiv. 10.

being awakened, we go out from the feast, and the world is changed.

Of all our friends, Jesus is the most exorbitant in His demands. He lays down the most exacting conditions, and almost repels us by their extravagance. He is not satisfied with us as we are. The interval between us and Him is very long, but His demand to be like Himself comes to us as an enabling inspiration, and we pluck up courage and rise. "Ye are My friends," He says, but He attaches His own conditions: "Ye are My friends, *if ye do whatsoever I command you.*"¹ He demands obedience, affinity of spirit and purpose, identity of ideal and life, as the indispensable conditions of His friendship.

But sometimes the demand goes further, and exacts sacrifice. To Jesus the claims of friendship may even supersede the claims of life itself. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."² He Himself offered the proof of His friendship upon the Cross. On Calvary, therefore, we see the

¹ John xv. 14.

² *Ibid.* xv. 13.

supreme demand which friendship made upon Christ ; but the Cross of Christ becomes in turn a new demand upon us. Sacrifice calls for sacrifice. If we would be friends of Christ, we must die daily till everything that is unlike Him is dead in us, and we live, and yet not we, but Christ in us.¹

The demand of Christ, however, sometimes comes as a rebuke and a summons to fresh fidelity. When Judas came out to the garden with "the great multitude with swords and staves"² to take Christ, he discovered that an unseen sword pierced his own heart. It was but a word ; yet that word on the lips of Christ had an infinite significance—the word Friend. "Friend," said Christ, after receiving the traitor's greeting and kiss, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"³ It was Christ's last appeal to a soul stepping over the brink of ruin—a word of salvation or doom. It summoned up a thousand memories of friendly offices rendered and enjoyed—memories that might call Judas back and

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² Matt. xxvi. 47.

³ *Ibid.* xxvi. 50.

restore him into the circle of friendship, or send him as with stings and scorpions to his doom.

We can never overvalue the uplifting power of a stronger and higher nature in the proximity of which we are permitted to live. In youth especially is this true. Who can ever forget the sacred sense of new life which thrilled his whole being when a friend revealed to him a soul that loved the true in thought and the heroic in action? It was as if a new star had suddenly appeared in the heavens, upsetting all our old calculations, but promising a fresh solution of great problems. The friend has revealed to us an ideal, which at first thrills us with despair. But the passion of the ideal stimulates us to imitation, and gradually hope dawns in the heart. The irresistible impulse to be like what we reverence leads us on, and at last we find that the friend has not only discovered but transfigured us. When Felix Holt first crossed the path of Esther, the gay and giddy girl felt that a new force had come into her life to interfere with her dreams and

her destiny. At first his presence exasperated her by the uncertainty of attraction and repulsion. She could not adjust herself to his seriousness of thought and heroism of life, nor could she shake herself loose from their irresistible spell. He discovered a new world to her, into which she made many timid excursions, till at last it claimed and won her soul and her life. The demands of a strong and pure friendship saved her from the mean, though luxurious, life in which her years might have been spent.

A good friend, however, is not easily known, and thinks he never knows his friend. They are always *getting to know* each other. Nothing ever surprises him : he expects to have fresh revelations of virtue and wisdom and grace, and we respond by attempting to live up to his expectations. His blindness to our faults is the truest vision. It creates what at first it does not see. It is the way of all seers. Their visions come to pass if they be true to the ideals for which men were created.

Friendship is a mutual enrichment. The stream refreshes the tree with its crystal waters, but the tree returns the favour by its cooling shade. Friends cannot go to each other empty-handed. There is always something to give and something to get that the needs of each be supplied. It is a commerce of souls. In giving you are getting, and in getting you are giving, and both friends are enriched.

“For the heart grows rich in giving; all its wealth is
living grain;

Seeds which mildew in the garner, scattered, fill with
gold the plain.”

The friend who is always receiving favours and conferring none soon becomes wearisome and profitless. You need not invest the wealth of your soul with a man who will pay no interest. You do not benefit yourself, and the probability is you cannot benefit him who has not the wit to turn to profit all you pay in. His life is not a going concern if it cannot pay for all it gets. Friendship has its obligations as well as its privileges. When our Lord said to His disciples, “I have called you friends; for all

things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you," He would not let them rest in the thought that they had nothing to do but receive. His friendship was a commerce of souls. What they received as revelation was to be returned as life. And hence He added, "I have chosen you," as friends, "that you should go and bring forth fruit."¹ Revelation is seed, and is to be returned to Christ as fruit.

The friend who only makes the poor return of flattery is to be shunned. There is no such flatterer as is a man's self; and if his flattery is echoed from the soul of a friend, he may conclude that his friend's soul, which sounds back his voice, is as empty as his own. One flatterer at a time is more than enough. He is one too many even for the best of men. Flattery is not an office of friendship. It is content to take you as you are, and leaves you worse. Your friend must make you discontented by his appreciation. What ill have

¹ John xv. 15, 16.

I done that my friend should fossilise me by his flattery? I want to grow. If he tells me I have done anything well, I wish him to inspire me with the thought that he believes and expects me to do better. I do not thank a friend who is content with me, or makes me content with myself. Flattery freezes the spring of aspiration.

One of the assumptions common to most men is that friendship can be maintained and flourish without culture. It is an assumption which leads to the disintegration of many a friendship. We forget that friendship is a flower, not a weed. It has to be tenderly cultivated, and demands our best thought and care. We cannot do what we like to a friend, nor can we say to him what we like. Friendship demands chivalry, respect, reverence. We must give him more than is his due for what he is—his due for what we believe he yet shall be. No one sees our faults as does a friend, but no one ignores them as he. The rude familiarity which prides itself in saying what

it thinks is a profanation of friendship. The candid friend is a didactic bore. Who wants to know what you think unless it helps one to live better? A man thinks many things he should not think, but he smothers them in the presence of a friend, who has a right to his best thoughts and has no concern with his worst. The grape-bloom of friendship is easily brushed off by the rude fingers which handle it as a common fruit. "Friend," said the King to one of His guests, "how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?"¹ Be it only a matter of dress, there is courtesy even in dress; and he who dines as a friend at the court of a king must wear the dress of the court. Friendship ceases when it degenerates into familiarity. It demands a certain amount of ceremonial. If we would keep a friend, we must never be so friendly as to be easily familiar: we must preserve towards him that courtliness of behaviour which is due to one of high rank and good breeding.

¹ Matt. xxii. 12.

Our friendships are often formed by haphazard and by accident. In some instances, prudence could not have calculated happier issues; in others, fate could not have ordered worse. When Xenophon was passing through a narrow gateway Socrates put out his stick, and asked how a man could attain to virtue and honour. Thus started a friendship which enriched the literature of the world. But however friendship may start, it is better to grow slowly. That which suddenly springs up, often as suddenly withers. The friend who is easily known is usually not worth the knowing. We prefer the friend who is constantly disabusing our ignorance and creating fresh expectations. Shallow natures are noisy and hurried: the deep are silent and slow. At the first view strong natures are often like granite precipices: they repel us by their bare strength and arrest our progress; but if we go forward with the patience of hope, we may find that there is a side path known to the few which takes us up and around where the rock is soft with moss, and green

with juicy grass, and beautiful with flowers. A man may be to a stranger cold and hard as stone, but the friend who knows the other side of his nature is aware that his strength is the foundation of rare sweetness and beauty.

The decline of friendship fills us with regret. In youth we have many friends, and the vows that bind us are for ever. We are pledged never to forget each other, and always to share each other's concerns. But how our friendships pass ! The circles of our lives are soon no longer concentric. We go our several ways, and our new environment brings to each a new experience, and with the new experience new ideals. The affinities are interrupted, and we pass insensibly out of each other's lives. When we meet again we are surprised that we cannot resume where we left off. We have lost the old ease, and can no longer indulge in the old confidences. We have changed ; and, though we desire to be as we were, we cannot. Few friendships can endure the attenuation of their bonds by distance ; fewer still can withstand

the corrosive influence of silence. There is one way by which all friendship may be maintained—by our friendship with the Common Friend. In Him we may have the same affinities, the same ends, the same ideals, however various our experiences may be ; and in Him we may meet again at last as members of the one family and children of the one home.

THE LOVE OF BOOKS

"Give me a nook and a book,
And let the proud world spin round :
Let it scramble by hook or by crook
For wealth or a name with a sound.
You are welcome to amble your ways,
Aspirers to place or to glory ;
May big bells jangle your praise,
And golden pens blazon your story !
For me, let me dwell in my nook,
Here, by the curve of this brook,
That croons to the tune of my book,
Whose melody wafts me for ever
On the waves of an unseen river."

WILLIAM FREELAND.

"If a book be worth reading once, it should be read twice."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

"I do not care for a First Folio of Shakespere. You cannot make a *pet* book of an author whom everybody reads."

CHARLES LAMB'S *Elia*.

CHAPTER IX

THE LOVE OF BOOKS

THE book-lover never tires of singing the praise of books, or of hearing it sung. To the mere outsider, who has never known what it is to fondle a book as if it were the animate body of a beautiful soul, the devoted book-lover sometimes looks as foolish as the ardent youth who has been caught in the act of protesting his affection. But book-lovers understand each other, and the praise of books is to them the singing of an old song, always fresh to the ear because of delightful associations. Leigh Hunt tells us that he saw Charles Lamb kiss an old folio of Chapman's *Homer*—and who does not appreciate this simple act of devotion on the part of our gentle high priest of the temple of letters? We do homage to him who does such

knightly homage to the object of our affection.

Books are the solace of the lonely man and the refuge of the busy. Within the four walls of a library the one finds company and the other solitude, as he wills. Books provide a convenient escape from ourselves and from the world. They carry us away from our worries and our cares with wings more fleet than those of birds, with a force as powerful and mysterious as that of electricity. A good book is the true Arabian wishing-cap of all ages. We sit down by the fire, and in a trice we are transported without movement to Parnassus or Paradise, the Academy or the Grove. The richest man can travel far without fatigue, and the poorest at small expense. The world lies at the book-lover's feet.

The love of books gives a man distinction and independence. It affords him access to the best of company and raises him above the need of vulgar entertainment. The best are seen at their best in their books ; so that it is

better to have shared a writer's best thoughts than to have eaten his best dinner. Besides, as great souls are not always in the self-revealing mood, they may disappoint us in their conversation by condescending to our ignorance or resenting our curiosity; but in their books they speak only what they think is worthy to be heard, and to them who think them worthy of a hearing. The writer of a good book throws open to us the door of his treasure-house and welcomes us as his guest, his friend, and his heir. If any man has kept company and feasted at the table with Plato, and Plutarch, and Paul, the Princes of Philosophy, Biography, and Religion, he can walk the earth with some distinction thereafter. Having lived under this Triumvirate, he can scarcely fail to love high thinking, noble living, and true piety.

Nor does he need to go abroad for his pleasures. They are always within call on his bookshelf. There is no purer fountain of enjoyment than a good book. "All their sport in the park," said Roger Ascham, "is but a shadow to that pleasure

I find in Plato. Alas! good folk, they never felt what true pleasure means." Of all our human pleasures, the love of books is the most lasting. It is the first that a youth should be encouraged to cultivate, for it is a seed that requires early planting. But, if it be well rooted in the spring, it flowers long and late, even into the winter. Our physical pleasures fail us with the decay of our physical faculties. Each has its season, and we pass with the passing years from more vigorous to milder outdoor games. But so long as the mind holds out and remains capable of enjoyment, the pleasures of reading are about the last to submit to our human decay. "When I read Seneca," said Justus Lipsius, the eminent humanist, "methinks I am beyond all human fortune, on the top of a hill above mortality."

Books are a medium of friendship. When fishers meet to compare notes on rivers, rods and reels, catches and catastrophes, a common experience draws them together. Even the dog-fancier strikes up a friendship on the dog

basis. But when we find one who has feasted and fattened his soul on the same book as ourselves, we have discovered an intellectual boon-companion whose intercourse never flags. We are one, not merely in sport or pastime, but in the deeper interests of the mind. The friend of my favourite author is my friend because his. We belong to the same spiritual brotherhood.

The mind, like Nature, has its seasons, and in each season there are books which come into efflorescence. There are few books—perhaps only one, the Bible—which are for all seasons of life. In the pinafore period, the nursery rhyme and the fairy tale are as natural as crocuses and daffodils in the spring. Who would deny this satisfaction and delight to the young mind? There comes, however, the romantic period of boyhood and girlhood, in which the nascent sense of the heroic, the wonderful, and even the grotesque, demands to be met; and *Robinson Crusoe*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Alice in Wonderland* hold sway, if any good friend has introduced them; if not, then the Penny Dreadful commands

allegiance. From that we soon pass into the climacteric of *sturm und drang*, in which hungry sentiment gnaws the heart, and the spirit of criticism and revolt fires the mind—the Wertherian period, in which Byron, and Shelley, and Mazzini are our masters. It is only when we sail into quieter waters, and are content to pursue the ideals which we cannot attain, to ameliorate the disorders which we cannot abolish, and to bear about the burden of our own ignorance and impotence, which increased wisdom and opportunity make more tolerable, though not less weighty—it is only then that we settle down to enjoy the peacefulness of Wordsworth, the sanity of Shakespeare, the beauty of Tennyson, and the strenuosity of Browning. Certain books, which most of us could name, have been formative forces in our lives, because we have come across them at the psychological moment which needed, and responded to, their appeal. We can remember how they opened up undiscovered tracts of thought to us, and summoned up new ideals of life before the soul. Did we not hail them as

special revelations? We open the same books after a few years have passed, and find the enchantment gone, as the sunset hue from the hills. They are tame and stale. Yet they are not changed; but we have changed, and the elective affinities between the writer and the reader no longer exist. They are now in season to some other soul, but out of season to us.

The love of books is not proved by the multitude of volumes we possess. There is a greed of accumulation in this as in other things, and it may argue poverty of mind. For with books, as with money, our wealth is not in the amount, but in the use. After all, most of us could put all the books we really prize as essential into a couple of bookshelves. The remainder we could part with without much loss, though we retain them for favours once bestowed and for associations always cherished. Yet we have outgrown them as we outgrow our clothes.

It matters not how many, but what, books we have. To know a few is better than to possess a thousand. A bosom friend is worth more than

many chance acquaintances. There are a few books which are as dear to us as personal friends, and from which it would be a wrench to be parted. These are the human documents in which great and beautiful souls with charming *naïveté* have revealed themselves or been revealed—such books as *Elia's Essays* or Boswell's *Johnson*. Their leaves are ever green. "Those authors," as Isaac D'Israeli has well said, "who appear sometimes to forget they are writers, and remember they are men, will be our favourites. He who writes from the heart will write to the heart."

It is with books as with men: the man who loves interprets. The secret of a book is captured by him who is captivated by the book. Love expects revelations of all that is beautiful and true, and is ready for them when they come. There is generally something good in a man who loves a child, a book, or even a dog. He is touched with the feeling of a great elemental need—the need of affection, wisdom, sympathy. Sometimes the hunger of the mind for wisdom

burns like a passion, holy and consuming. When a man has learned to make sacrifices on the altar of learning, and would rather want his breakfast than want a book upon which he has set his heart, he is a true book-lover. He can understand the extravagance of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who wrote : " When I want a book, it is as a tiger wants a sheep."

A man knows little or nothing of books who only reads when he must, and repairs to his bookshelf when in want of useful information. It is only when one does not know what he wants, and seizes the volume, actuated by an indefinable craving for satisfaction, that one can graduate as a lover of books. He is drawn to books by an irrepressible attraction. We forgive Alexander many of his glorious crimes when we learn that the great warrior used to lay his *Iliad* under his pillow with his sword, as if he might at any hour of the night awaken in need of either. A good book is a precious blessing of God, and surely the act of feeding upon high thoughts is as sacred an act as eating

our dinner ! The one may rank with the other as "our daily bread." Little wonder that Charles Lamb should ask why those who say grace before meat should not also as devoutly say grace before Shakespeare, or Milton, or Spenser ? Surely Shakespeare is as good a gift of heaven as a chop ! Literature is only profane to the profane.

Macaulay has defined the scholar as "one who reads Plato with his feet on the fender." Let us hope that he did not mean in the original, else many a good scholar would be ruled out of court. But the definition stands, for it implies that reading is not a task but a luxury, not a matter of duty but of pleasure, with no ulterior or commercial interest beyond that of fructifying the mind and elevating the character. Hazlitt, however, gives another side of the truth, and indicates that the scholar's love of letters may be cultivated apart from the easy-chair and feet-in-the-fender comforts of life. He tells us how one day he got wet quite through, yet when he arrived at the inn at Tewkesbury, he

sat up all night to read *Paul and Virginia*, adding, careless of the risks he ran, "Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read." And one remembers how the great bibliophile, Samuel Johnson, who could, as Mrs. Knowles put it, "tear the heart" out of a book in a few minutes, sat at Mr. Dilly's dinner-table with Sheridan's *Account of the late Revolution in Sweden* wrapt in the tablecloth on his knee, "resembling a dog who holds a bone in his paw in reserve, while he eats something else which has been thrown to him." What was a good dinner in comparison with a good book? We do not inquire whether Johnson thus conformed to the manners of the time, but no one can doubt that the act originated in the passion of the true scholar.

We often learn much from books with which we do not agree. The fruit of some books is for food, the leaves of others for medicine. Just as there are drugs which we do not like for themselves, but for their healthful effects, so

there are books which are nauseous to the taste, but act as tonics to the mind. I like a book which sets me on edge, which administers an irritant to my mind, which does not agree with me any more than I with it. If I disagree with a book I cannot ignore it. I must verify my own position in view of its assault. Sometimes, indeed, we learn more from our enemies than from our friends. In matters of thought contradiction is often better than sympathy. A good general never reckons that he knows the strength of his position until he has discovered the disposition of the forces of the enemy. So the gentle reader, in order to preserve his sense of security, must often go out to do a little disagreeable scouting.

Of all books which teach us the difficult art of life, we learn most from biographies honestly written. They are the ethics of life in the concrete. It is something to know how a man has conducted himself with distinction in a difficult world like this. Even a man's faults, when his biographer cares to reveal them, are

as instructive as his virtues and achievements. To have threescore years and ten of thinking and doing summed up in thrice as many pages adds indefinitely to the short term of our mortal existence. A good biography is the quintessence of a soul, the attar of roses, the resurrection of a spirit, rather than the monument of a man. Who ever tires of the biographies of the Bible? That wonderful picture-gallery of rapid portrait sketches has treasures which outrival Raphael and Leonardo in beauty, and skill, and endurance. What biographies compare with them for dignity, and brevity, and completeness of treatment? All the mere trifles and accidents of life have disappeared, and nothing seems worthy of preservation but the thought, the word, the instance, that illustrates or reveals the soul as subject to the praise or blame of God.

Next to the Bible, though not near it, comes old Plutarch, so human, so concrete, so factual in every page. He does not paint men, as the ancient Hebrew masters do, as God sees them,

but as they appear to their fellows. He makes them speak to us and act before us as on a stage, and then leaves them to our judgment. His *Lives* are a sort of biographical pemmican which may sustain a man in many a weary march in the journey. Every youth should pack them in his satchel.

What reader has not his favourite biographies, which have passed like iron into his blood? One can mark as red-letter days in his calendar the reading of Boswell's *Johnson* (the greatest of English biographies), Carlyle's *John Sterling*, Mrs. Oliphant's *Edward Irving*, Lewes's *Goethe*, Booth-Tucker's *Catherine Booth* (a ponderous monument, under which lie buried much grace and beauty), and Stopford Brooke's *Robertson of Brighton*. Many of these have kept us out of bed late at night, but we confess that only one—the last—has taken us out of bed at four in the morning.

But, of course, in the reading of biographies, as of other books, much depends upon the reader's mood. The book we pass by to-day

as stale may be as honey to-morrow. For the flavour of a book does not altogether depend upon the book any more than the flavour of a dinner depends altogether upon the dinner. Much depends upon the appetite which we bring with us. We must not blame the cook, but rather cure our dyspepsia. So the book which is commended to-day may have to lie on our shelf for months or years till we have that hunger which perhaps no other book will satisfy. But having feasted upon a great book, in which a man has spread his soul before us, we cannot rise up and play: we must go out to live. For the end of reading is not amusement, nor even knowledge, which may only be amusement intellectualised, but life. No book is a substitute for life, any more than a primer on botany is a substitute for a garden of flowers.

This leads us to inquire as to what is the function of books. It was Emerson who said, in his own enigmatical way, that "books are for the scholar's idle times." The scholar is

not a mere reading machine, a mere consumer of other men's thoughts. He is a consumer that he may be a producer. His reading is only the stoking of the furnace to get up steam in preparation for work of thought or action. A good book tells us how a man has seen, and what a man has thought of, God, or man, or things, or events. You have eyes: go and observe for yourself, and use your brain for thinking on what you have seen. A book is true, and therefore helpful, which deals first-hand with reality, and which says to us: "This is how it struck me; go back to the original and see how it strikes you." Palissy said, with a certain legitimate pride: "I had no other books than heaven and earth, which are open to all"; which reminds us of Ruskin's assertion that Rouen, Geneva, and Pisa were his tutresses.

We do not take up a book to give us thoughts, but to make us think. If we have the privilege of rethinking another's thoughts, we have the duty of adding the personal equation of our own. We do not grow strong by always eating,

nor wise by always reading. Dyspepsia, physical or mental, is the result. "The hardest way of learning is easy reading." Health comes to us by the use of a well-nourished body, as wisdom by that of a well-nourished brain. A man goes to a book for stimulus and guidance to direct his energies in dealing with facts. If he only takes what he gets, spoon-fed, he may be

"Deep-versed in books, but shallow in himself."

Wisdom, like wealth, is ultimately wrung from the elements by the man who exerts himself to woo and win their secrets and resources.

But books have another function. They are a corrective of our errors and conceits. They tell us how men have thought, what they have done, and in what manner they have behaved themselves in the world. They preserve to us the past, with which we may compare the present, and so keep the unity and continuity of human life intact. Had we no books, life would be very much a series of blundering experiments; but the august spirit of the past

enshrined in books is there to warn us. And when new solutions of old difficulties are produced, and fill the thinker with conceit, that same spirit emerges from yellow pages and dusty bindings to tell him that there is nothing new under the sun. When we hear the poor pessimist puling and whining about the wickedness and misery of humanity and the general disorder of the universe, we wonder where he has lived, and what he has been doing wherever he has been. Has he a Bible, or a Plutarch? Has he read the lives of the saints,—the life of Francis of Assisi, for instance,—or of the humbler and more modern saints, whose names have not yet found their way into the calendar? Strange that a wicked and disordered world ever produced, or tolerated, such virtue and beauty in human nature! A course of biographical reading, if he did not care to mingle with decent, godly society, not yet defunct in these times, would administer a corrective to his atrabilious mind.

Even the buying of books is part of a liberal

education. When we bring home a new book, what hopes leap up in the heart! We feel as if we were going out to explore some new country in which surprises awaited us, or as if we were starting on a holiday in which every hour was to be crowded with enjoyment. No house is properly furnished if the bookshelves are not filled. The poverty of books in a house indicates the narrowness of the lives of its inmates. Enlarge your bookcase, and you enlarge your dwelling. It becomes a palace of kings, a castle of warriors, a home of heroes, filled with the élite of society. They sup with you at your table, talk with you at your fireside, and you go forth to the humblest occupation with a new dignity and bearing. The friend who introduces you to a new writer with a message for you is regarded ever afterwards as your benefactor. If he has led you into a new world of ideas, he has done more for you than if he had filled your pocket with gold. He has discovered a mine, which you can work, and mint into current coin of thought and life, at your

leisure. Books are a perennial spring of enjoyment and utility, and the youth who has learned the love of them early in life starts with the highest possibilities of culture and virtue.

THE SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS
OF YOUTH

" There are numberless other cases also in which those who have good sense and good laws ought not to drink wine, so that if what I say is true, no city will need many vineyards."

PLATO'S *Laws*.

" The gambling disease is marked by a moral and intellectual unsettlement, by an impatience with the slow processes of legitimate accumulation, by a revolt against the discipline of steady growth and sustained action. The gambler lives in a state of unnatural strain. Like an insane person, he stands on the threshold of a grandiose world the high lights of which throw the sober realities of the real into shadow. Moreover, his vice develops the self-regarding instincts into hideous and criminal proportions."

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD in ROWNTREE'S
Betting and Gambling.

" But when a man has commenced sot——. O pause, thou sturdy moralist, thou person of stout nerves and a strong head, whose liver is happily untouched, and ere thy gorge riseth at the *name* which I had written, first learn what the *thing* is ; how much of compassion, how much of human allowance, thou mayest virtuously mingle with thy disapprobation. Trample not on the ruins of a man."

CHARLES LAMB'S *Elia*.

CHAPTER X

THE SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS OF YOUTH

A MAN has not gone far in the voyage of life till he comes within sight of Scylla and Charybdis, the rock and the whirlpool which have wrecked so many of his fellow-travellers. Gambling and strong drink present many allurements. They promise us pleasure, but plunge us into misery ; and, spite of all the wreckage of humanity that floats around the fatal pair, fresh adventurers may always be seen sailing into the enchanted straits, confident that they shall taste the joys without the bitterness, and prove themselves as votaries without falling as victims.

It would be foolish to deny that there is pleasure to be found in gambling and wine. A sensation which quickens the pulse and excites the brain is usually a source of pleasure : it shakes us out

of our normal life, and seems to enrich us with new experiences. Gambling summons us into the region of the uncertain, and brings us face to face with the possibilities of the unknown ; whilst strong drink transports us into the strange world of the unusual, and drugs the care and sorrow which seldom cease to haunt us in the habitual sobrieties of our life. Both provide us for the moment with an apparently easy and harmless passage into the lotus-isle of dreams in which we forget our waking realities.

It is seldom the love of evil that drives men to either of these vices ; it is the love of life. It is a craving for relief from the cramped and narrow conditions of existence which hem men in and exasperate them into revolt. It is the desire for expansion, enrichment, novelty, which they hope to find in the enchanted land of the uncertain and the unknown, when the certain and the known prove disappointing. For we have an unconquerable faith that there is somewhere something better than anything we have yet experienced—a faith that may hurry us in the

wrong direction when it is not guided in the right. Gambling and strong drink are thus resorted to as satisfactions for certain deep-seated natural desires ; yet they are, at the best, but spurious, substitutionary pleasures, to which the foolish, the wearied, and the weak betake themselves when they fail to apprehend those pleasures which, because at God's " right hand," are at the hand of every man who will take them.

Although it is necessary, it is not easy to discern the moral quality of our pleasures. They all seem innocent to the innocent. But we soon learn to distinguish between pleasures that exhaust and pleasures that recreate, pleasures which we pay for and pleasures which repay us. For the moral quality of a pleasure is not measured by the keenness of the sensations of the moment, but by the residuum which is left behind as a permanent contribution to the character.

Few will deny that the gambler and the drunkard aggravate in the end the miseries from which they momentarily escape. All

abnormal excitements are paid for by abnormal depressions. For happiness, which is the goal we seek, more or less blindly, in all our pleasures, is only acquired through the quiet and permanent satisfactions which enrich our memory and our character—the satisfactions which come from intellectual acquisition, moral attainment, and altruistic service. Those pleasures may be safely indulged in, in which the life which we expend is repaid with richer and fuller life. But who will not agree that gambling and drunkenness are hostile to human well-being—a species of intellectual and moral suicide, slow or swift?

The time is past, however, for mere denunciation of these two great evils. What is wanted is to understand them, to get behind and beneath them, to account for their origin and their growth. We shall never scold men into virtue; we may win them by addressing their understanding and lifting up their ideals. The love of vice is but superficial in most men: the love of virtue is fundamental. If men only knew how to be virtuous! But they often blunder

through life, making many experiments where a little knowledge might save them, if it were commended by love.

It would be superfluous to expatiate upon the extent to which these two evils have presently grown. They are the two black plagues of our modern life. They pollute our streets, ruin our homes, decimate our churches, vitiate our commercial honour, reduce our capacity for work, poison the moral atmosphere, fill our poorhouses, prisons, and asylums—and even our graves. They claim their votaries and victims among the poor as well as the rich, among women and even children as well as men, and, like twin enchantresses, lure on their thousands by their mirth and music, in the great dance of disease, dishonour, insanity, and death.

But whilst everyone deplotes the results of gambling and drunkenness, few take the pains to inquire into the ethical significance of the habits themselves. We laugh at the fool that is fleeced, and go our way. We smile at the drunkard, and let him go his—as best he can.

We say it is folly, weakness, sheer wrong-headedness, perhaps ; but we seldom think of it as a vice, a sin against a man's self, against society, against God. We may abstain from a habit on the low ground of prudence, for fear of consequences. That leaves us open to temptation when we think the consequences may be avoided. But when, on the higher ground of virtue, we regard a habit as wrong, as a sin against God and a crime against all that is best within us, we throttle the desire as soon as it is conceived, if the desire can be even conceived in a mind that is fortified by such an ethical conviction.

Now, let us ask the question, Are gambling and drunkenness wrong? Are they vices, sins, in themselves? Four indictments may be brought against them. They are irrational, immoral, anti-social, and irreligious. If we can prove these four indictments, these habits must stand convicted and condemned as criminal at the bar of our judgment.

They are *irrational*. The gambler dethrones reason and puts chance in its place ; the drunkard

dethrones reason and puts nothing in its place. In gambling we regulate our conduct in the disposal of our property by something outside of us, over which we have no control and the issue of which we cannot regulate. We put it beyond the sphere of reason. Indeed, the exercise of our reason is carefully eliminated by raising the conditions of the game, or race, or contest, to the highest point of uncertainty. It is not a fair bet when the combatants are not equal in their skill or equalised by handicap, when the dice are loaded, or when one of the parties is in "the know." The honest gambler is supposed to know nothing. Reason has nothing to do with the issue. So far as he knows anything beforehand about results, he is a cheat and a rogue. In other words, the essence of gambling is that a man gives up his reason, forfeits the use of it in a certain transaction, and bows down at the altar of chance, feverishly awaiting her verdict. Now, if reason, as sane men suppose, is the crown of our manhood and the guide of our conduct, deliberately to

supplant reason by chance is surely an irrational act.

Something similar, though not quite the same, takes place in drunkenness. The drunkard does not deliberately dethrone his reason, but he comes to the same result by another way. He excites the brain so that it runs riot, he looks out upon a topsy-turvy world, loses all sense of proportion and value, and ultimately drives reason out of control and possession. Hence drunkenness is the frequent excuse of all kinds of imbecilities and crimes. It is irrational.

They are *immoral*. The moral life consists in the formation of character by fixed and rational habits of thought and action. We are moral beings because these habits are freely determined by nothing but ourselves. In other words, our acts are ours, as moral agents, when they originate in, or have the consent of, our own will. If, however, we had no self-determination, morality would not be possible. We cannot speak of the morality of a tree, or a stone, or a cow. Now, the gambler consents that

his habits of thought and action which go to the formation of his character should, in certain matters at least, be regulated by what? Not by his own will exercising control over his conduct, not by the will of any other more or less rational and free agent exercising that control. In the act of gambling he gives himself over to be influenced by forces extraneous to himself and avowedly incalculable in their issues. He wills to have no will; gives up his free self-determination, which is the soul of morality in man, in favour of chance, and thus forfeits the opportunity of moral culture. But to forfeit the opportunity of moral culture is for man the basest immorality.

By another road the drunkard reaches the same destination. By the exercise of his will in the first instance he gratifies certain desires, which gradually suffocate the will; so that he too hands himself over to a power which robs him of the freedom of self-determination and degrades him by making him do stupid, insane, and vicious things, which otherwise he would

not. He ceases to be himself; and, when a man knowingly ceases to be himself, he sins against his moral nature.

They are also *anti-social*. Gambling and drunkenness are essentially selfish forms of enjoyment. It is true that both are indulged in, to begin with, under a certain guise of sociability. Gamblers stake their money as the price of a pleasure mutually desired; drinkers drink to each other's health! But in each case we must take the whole procedure into account. When the stakes are paid, one has purchased his pleasure by the pain, loss, perhaps ruin, of another, who almost inevitably involves others in his suffering. The one has given no equivalent to the other for his enjoyment of winning; he has given less than nothing, for he has involved him and others in loss and probably misery. When the bout of drunkenness is over, the moral accounts have to be settled. Two fools are losers in their selfish greed of pleasure. They have, as members of society, obtained the satisfaction of their desires

at the expense of their mental and physical fitness for fulfilling their functions in the body politic. They have depreciated their civic value, and, what is worse, brought pain, dishonour, and loss not only upon themselves but upon the innocent who are related to them.

Nor is that all. It cannot escape the observation of the student of ethics that these two vices are the prolific mothers of a vicious brood, which batten upon our social well-being. They beget a searing of the conscience, a hardening of the sympathies, a withering of the affections, a stifling of the desire and ability for honest work, a brutalising of the passions, a sapping of the foundations of family life, which desecrate all our social ideals in their bestial selfishness. One of the most pressing problems of the hour is how a rising democracy, which is active for social betterment, can ever hope to reach its destination when these anti-social vices are eating like a cancer into its vitals and falsifying the ideals which it aspires to attain. There is little hope of social regeneration until the desires

and habits of the individuals who compose society are purged of selfishness and brought into line with the social ideals which are so clamant for realisation.

And once more, gambling and drunkenness are *irreligious*. If we dethrone the reason, abrogate the will, and flout the social well-being by our conduct, our claims to religion are nugatory. We cannot supplant the God of reason by the goddess of chance without poisoning the religious spirit at its very fountainhead. Nor can we throw out of our hands the reins of our will, and give ourselves over to the dominion of hazard, without forfeiting our true religious freedom, which is found in the self-determination of our wills. And every Christian should know that one-half of our religion lies in our respect for the social well-being. The whole of our religious life is covered by the two wings of duty—love God, and love our neighbour. Whilst it is true that we cannot love our neighbour, in the deepest sense, without loving God—and so all high service of society springs

from religious faith—it is also true that it is in our love of our neighbour that our love of God finds a daily opportunity for its expression. It is noteworthy that nearly all the commendations and condemnations of Jesus Christ were based upon social service or disservice rather than upon theological opinion. The Samaritan was commended for his fine humanity, though his divinity was all wrong in comparison with that of the Priest and Levite. Dives was punished not because he was rich or irreligious, but because he ignored the social contrast. Zacchæus was praised not because he was a religious man, as religion was then understood, but because of his charity to the poor and his conscientious restitution to his injured neighbour. Those who did anything for the least of Christ's brethren, and those who did nothing, were rewarded or punished on the ground that the service of humanity, the care for the well-being of society, was the service of Christ and one of the principal disciplines and functions of the religious spirit. So the very fact that

gambling and drunkenness are irrational, immoral, and anti-social, renders them incompatible with, and hostile to, religion.

When a man apprehends clearly the ethical value of these two habits, he will hesitate before he steps upon that inclined plane down which he is in danger of being hurled with ever increasing velocity till he reaches those depths of depravity into which the confirmed gambler and drunkard fall. Even the occasional gambler and moderate drinker have to remember that all habits indulged in tend to increase in strength, and to diminish our power of control, till they tyrannise over us like fiends; for the flower-chains of unhallowed pleasure, with which we thoughtlessly and gaily decorate ourselves, imperceptibly transform themselves into shackles of iron and brass which bind us at last as slaves.

Passing from the ethical consideration of the subject, let us try to understand the conditions and causes which tend to the prevalence of these two colossal vices. As we have already hinted, they are characteristic diseases of the dissatisfied.

Gambling and drink are for the most part a protest against life's monotony, a revolt from its narrow limits. At the apex and the base of the social pyramid these vices are peculiarly prevalent. The few at the top suffer from ennui; the many at the bottom from anæmia. The over-fed and under-worked, the under-fed and over-worked, are alike in this, that they are both liable to feel the pressure of monotony, which inevitably breeds the desire for variety, interest, excitement. If they have not wit enough to create, or opportunity to embrace, legitimate satisfactions for their natural craving for a fuller life, they betake themselves to the illegitimate. In many cases, it is not, in the first instance at least, the greed of gain or the love of drink which induces men to stake their money or lift their glass. The idle rich flee to either or both to find a new sensation to their already over-stimulated nerves, the laborious poor to get relief from the dull and dreary sameness of their drudgery and to prove to themselves that they have any nerves at all. The wider

the separation between capital and labour, the more is each class liable to such vices. The one has all the luxury that money can buy, and is ever eager for new forms of excitement to stimulate its jaded nature ; the other has little hope of escape from the treadmill of poverty and toil, and purchases by betting and beer a precarious and temporary relief from the grinding anxieties of life.

Other causes, however, have to be taken into account. Industrial competition has necessitated more economical methods of work. In the modern factory and workshop the division and subdivision of labour have robbed men and women of the interest and mental stimulus which they formerly found in making a complete article. Formerly they were artificers—they made a whole boot, a whole garment, or a whole needle, and had a pride in seeing their work progressing to completion stage by stage under their hands ; now they are parts of the great industrial machine, and only make a heel, a hem, or an eye. And to spend life, day in

day out, and year in year out, in doing the same thing wearies the nerve, fatigues the brain, and burdens with the monotony of existence. Humanity is crushed under such a régime of work, and naturally revolts, and demands relief. Besides this, there are many forms of labour which are too heavy for the human machine. The frame is overstrained and prematurely exhausted, and the worker is driven to pick himself up for the moment by resorting to the precarious pleasures furnished by the bookmaker and the publican.

Fashion also enters into this as into other habits of life. Spite of all the democratic sentiment of the day, there is ever the tendency in men to imitate what are called "their betters." Horse-racing and its concomitant betting are "the sport of gentlemen." To be able to talk fluently about the Doncaster or the Derby, or to indulge in the small gossip of the stable or the ring, justifies in many minds the weak pretence of sharing in the pleasures of the aristocracy. Every nobody wants to be some-

body. Horse-betting is sanctioned by the nobility and gentry, and who does not wish to taste the joys of the "upper ten" at the expense of an occasional half-crown?

Sometimes, however, the temptation takes another form in the case of those who upon genteel salaries are assisting to pile up the incomes of their masters, who are more fortunate though not more clever than themselves. With less margin than the common wage-earners, they decline to be classed with those of such plebeian tastes, and assume airs and contract habits beyond their slender means; and, when ordinary occupation holds out but little prospect of a larger income, they hope to make by chance what they never expect to earn by steady labour. But chance plays tricks with the cleverest fools, and too often they are driven to embezzlement in order to meet their debts of "honour." The poor jackdaw struts about for a little in its borrowed glory, but a ruthless fate is at its heels and plucks the peacock feathers, to its discomfiture and shame.

But, when all is said, the fundamental fact remains that the resort to gambling and drink argues a poorly furnished mind. When the apology of the environment is offered for the vices of humanity, it is found to break down at many points in our experience. The facts of everyday life are ever reminding us that it is not the things which are without that defile a man. There are saints in the slums. Heroes spring up amidst the humdrum of life's drudgery. The native goodness of the soul is ever asserting itself, and with a fine resilience humanity rebounds from the hard soil on which it is cast. There are other and more important factors than environment in the making of men. The gambler and the drunkard are found in mansions enriched with all the luxuries of art and set amidst all the beauties of nature. In circumstances most favourable to virtue, vice often surprises us and casts suspicion upon many of our theories of social betterment; whilst, on the other hand, there are those in poor and squalid surroundings who refuse to be dis-

couraged. Though they cannot remove to better homes, they keep their hearts sweet and wholesome with hope, decorate their minds with pictures of high ideals, and entertain Christ as a friend and guest at their fireside. For them mean streets open up vistas that lead into a better world, and the grace of God transfigures the common circumstances of life. It is when the brain is barren of uplifting ideas, and the heart has no seed of hope implanted in its soil ; when men and women see no heaven opening over their meagre lives, and hear no gospel inviting them to higher comforts and reliefs—it is then they resort to the false and foolish satisfactions of gambling and drink in the hope of getting wealth which they know not how to use, and a brief relief from miseries from which they have discovered no better escape.

Such considerations suggest to us, however, some thoughts on remedies. As we have observed, there are certain social and economic conditions which favour the growth and extension of these two vices. These conditions create

a predisposition, and provide the soil upon which gambling and drunkenness flourish. But, as we have seen, the seed is elsewhere ; the seed is the man himself : his disposition. We may, therefore, transform the outward conditions of life and yet not effect any widespread and radical cure ; for gamblers and drunkards are found among those who live in environments most favourable to the virtuous life, whilst patient industry and exemplary sobriety thrive somehow even in the most unfavourable hovels of poverty. The transformation of the environment, however, is important, as it removes temptation and changes the predisposing circumstances of vice. But, after all, we have to deal with the man, the human personality, who creates the environment suitably to his disposition. Whilst everyone has a duty towards the society of which he is a unit, and should strive towards social betterment, each has also a duty towards himself ; and probably the first and best contribution he can offer to the solution of this, as of every great social problem, is the

personal protest. Social amelioration is the distant goal which will only be reached when the social conscience is sufficiently awakened ; but personal abstinence is the immediate remedy, which is at hand to everyone who feels the call to escape. It matters not under what surroundings a man exists ; if he has the will to rise above them, though he may not be able at the moment to rise out of them, there are means at his disposal to further his endeavour and to give him power to stand free.

In the line of social reform many things might be done to reduce the facilities of vice and to increase the inducements to virtue. Surely the time has come when we should set some limits to our idolisation of the liberty of the subject. Society has taken power to itself to protect its interests against plague, fever, diphtheria ; why should it not have power to protect itself against moral pestilences which pollute the common social atmosphere ? It is questionable if our physical evils are as dangerous to the community as our moral vices. When

we consider the human wreckage of gambling and drunkenness ; the loss, the poor health, the misery, the slow suicide, the silent suffering and even murder, of which they are the mediate or immediate causes, one marvels at the tardiness of legislation and the indifference or long-suffering of society. The best citizenship of our country, the finest souls of the Church, are spending, with rare unselfishness, time and energy and wealth, fighting against the symptoms and results of these two gigantic vices, whilst so little is done to apply the knife to the eradication of the disease itself. Contagion spreads, and fresh souls in each generation are falling victims to these moral plagues ; and all the while we hug to our breasts the great doctrine of non-interference with the liberty of the subject ! Liberty for what ? To pollute and disintegrate society ; to ruin homes ; to propagate disgrace, disease, dishonour, dishonesty ; to increase poverty, crime, lunacy, suicide, and murder ; and to call upon the long-suffering, sober, and honest, and hard-working to pay the ever-increasing bill !

There are subjects and subjects in the realm, and surely the liberty of the well-doing should be considered when it is being restrained and violated by the licence of the ill-doing !

Whilst it may be impossible to stamp out gambling and drunkenness from society, it is possible to reduce the temptations to them, and to save at least the innocent. The legislature might pass laws which would reduce the existing facilities for betting and gambling and drunkenness, and protect at least the wage-earning masses against themselves. The press might exercise a self-denying ordinance, or be forced by law to purge itself of participation and complicity in at least one of these evils by ceasing to pander to the betting fraternity by the publication of "tips" and bookmakers' advertisements. Trades Unions and Friendly Societies might raise the warning voice against foolish habits by which workers are filched of their hard-earned wages by the bookies and publicans who batten upon them ; whilst the Church has ever its duty of holding up purer and nobler aims, and

higher ideals, to displace the mean conceptions of life's pleasures and purposes which presently maintain. All these things might be done to transform the unhappy social environment in which these vices breed and multiply their foul and greedy progeny.

But until these are done for society, there is something which each may do for himself. Each can make his personal protest. He can shake clear from all connivance and complicity, and make himself proof against their temptation. But how? There are two ways. When Jason in search of the golden fleece had to sail past the Syrens, he plugged the ears of his mariners with wax that they might not hear their enchantments and seductions. This was the attempt to inhibit the natural desire for pleasure; the forfeiture of a satisfaction they would rather have enjoyed in order to pass on to a better satisfaction farther off. But Ulysses had a higher way. When he sailed past, he had Orpheus on board, and commanded him to play up his best; and the enchanting strains

of purer music made his crew deaf to the coarser songs of the Syrens. This is deliverance by displacement : not the inhibition of our desires, but the education of them ; making the soul deaf to the lower voices by listening to the higher. Here, then, is the door of escape from these great temptations—a door that is open to each of us. “ Cease to do evil ” is not enough : we must “ learn to do well ” ; and, indeed, we cannot cease from the one habit without super-inducing, or displacing it by, the other. If, therefore, the tedium and monotony of life begins to creep over your soul, and you are tempted to the foolish excitements of gambling or drink for relief, switch the mind into a higher direction. Generate an interest in something—in anything. Learn the violin, study botany, German, butterflies, bees, beetles—anything that will occupy the mind with new interests. Buy books, or join a library. Throw yourself into some piece of benevolent or Christian work that will deliver you from lassitude, ennui, disappointment. Who cares for a disappointed or dissatisfied man ?

Not even himself. He is a mere ghost, with no blood in the veins, no hope, no initiative, no future. If a man will deliver his soul from these hideous vices, it can only be as Perseus delivered Andromeda from the monster—by fighting it from above, poised in the air on wings that kept him above the plain upon which the monster grovelled. We must fight these monsters, sustained upon the wings of great ideals.

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